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Kendall

A SWEET STORY FULL OF FUN

THE VINEGAR BUYER

SHARP SAYINGS OF SHARP PEOPLE

BY

EZRA KENDALL

FOUNDED ON JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY'S POEM
"JAP MILLER"

ILLUSTRATED

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The story of "THE VINEGAR BUYER," relating many of the humorous incidents in the life of Joe Miller, joker, is founded on JAMES WHITCOMB RILEY'S famous poem entitled "JAP MILLER."

The dramatization of the story is by Herbert Hall Winslow.

The character of Joe Miller, joker, as played by Mr. Kendall over one thousand times has made more than ten hundred thousand people laugh.

A Stranger Drifts into Boscomb's Corners and Is Welcome.

A stranger sauntered into Boscomb's Corners one June afternoon, and, being a native son of Indiana, he was naturally gifted as an off-hand joker.

When he inquired his way to the town pump he made friends with both the "wets" and the "drys" by speaking of drinking water as "sky juice."

A few steps from the well a lady was seated in a rolling chair.

Her gray hair made her youthful face the more interesting, and the stranger, after quenching his thirst, found himself attracted.

His frank and honest manner had always been accepted as genuine and consequently he had never had any difficulty in making himself agreeable to people whom he found alone.

He guessed the lady as being from the Sanitarium on the hill.

The rich laces of the lady's dress suggested to him that he had better look himself over, dust off his shabby frock coat, and brush up his old high hat before presenting himself.

Then he gathered up a package which he carried under his left arm, and with his hat in his right hand, he shambled a few steps past the rolling chair.

Without turning toward the lady, he shaded his eyes with his hat, looked off into the sky, and said: "I suppose that's what you call a baby blue, isn't it?"

There was no reply.

He ventured again: "That white cloud floats like a big snow flake, doesn't it?"

Again there was no reply.

To him the long silence was mentally distressing and his neck was getting tired holding his head back.

He didn't know whether to apologize, or to just go on about his business and leave the lady to think that he had been talking to himself.

Just then something occurred that prevented him from doing either.

A pretty, young girl, about eighteen, came running toward them. She addressed the lady as "Mother dear," and told her that the mail was late.

"My child, will you please answer this gentleman's questions," said the lady.

This odd turn to the situation was so confusing to the stranger, that when she asked: "What questions, mother dear," he found himself explaining that he had no intention to intrude.

He noticed the lady did not even turn her face toward him while he was speaking. He accepted this as a rebuke, and concluded by saying: "I most humbly beg your pardon, Madam. I do not blame. you for not wanting to even see such a common clod as I.''

"What has he dared ask you, Mother; shall I call Mr. Stripe?"

"No, no, my dear," said the Mother, in a kindly tone, "if the gentleman does not wish to repeat his questions, I will try to repeat them for him. He said, 'I suppose that is what you call a baby blue, isn't it?' ''

"Believe me, Madam, my remark did not refer to you, or to anything you have on. I was referring to the color of the sky."

"Yes, I supposed you were," replied the lady. "Then, dear, he said something about a white cloud floating like a big snow flake."

"And so it does; it's still there, Madam," and he pointed upward. "You can see for yourself."

"Alas, sir, I can not see for myself," said the lady, "I am blind. That is why I did not answer your questions."

The lady turned her face toward him, and when he saw her large, brown sightless eyes, his feelings overflowed and blinded his own eyes for a moment.

"I am always glad to be told of the clouds and the skies, for then my ears must be my eyes," she said. "May I inquire who you are, sir."

"My name? Joe Miller, lady, and I'm selling music boxes to attach on sewing machines."

He untied the package and held the box on his arm, while it played a dozen tunes.

"Now, just see, dear, what we would have missed," said the lady, "if the gentleman had not stopped to inquire whether the color of the sky was 'baby blue.' I am Mrs. Arlington, widow of the late John Arlington, of Indianapolis," she said, addressing Joe, "and this young lady is my daughter, Mildred. At present we are at the Sanitarium, and although we have no sewing machine," she laughed, "we will be pleased to have you call just the same, and bring the 'attachment.'"

Just to show his appreciation, Joe insisted on wheeling the rolling chair to the top of the hill, for Mildred.

On the way nothing escaped him he thought would interest her mother.

Through his eyes she saw the June roses; the wheat fields; blue birds in flight; and even the tints in purple and blue on a butterfly's wings as it balanced itself on a clover top.

—oo—

Frogs from the Bogs
Accepted as "Greenbacks" for Rum
From the Village Drone.

Joe Miller's funny stories and ready wit illuminated Boscomb's Corners into the light that laughter brings to any human abode three miles from a steam car station.

To the patients at the Sanitarium he was a tonic, and they looked forward to his visits as a part of the treatment.

Business was bad for Joe in the music box line, because that mathematical myth, the "per-capita" of cash in the U. S., had not as yet "per-capped" around the Corners.

Even the barber shop had long since closed for good, and many a farmer's chin was supporting a heft of hair that fluttered in the wind like a handful of hemp; and the children's locks were being cut at home, to the pattern of a pint bowl.

Alexander Stripe's "Ready Relief" shop, for the sale of lunch and

liquor, still held forth at the corner of the square, across from the town pump, where those in despair could increase and preserve their troubles in alcohol.

One morning, about two weeks after the first time that Joe slaked his thirst at the pump, Sandy Talbut, the town drone, who had been sleeping all night on an old board bench by the pump, was awakened by Aleck Stripe, who was standing in front of the Ready Relief, ringing a large hand bell.

"Wake up, Sandy," he shouted, "stage is in."

"I heered it," he yawned; then he sat up, stretched himself, and, half asleep, scuffed up the dust to the corner and back, and said: " 'Taint no use ringin', they didn' no body come."

"What, no passengers yet? Well, that makes four tines I've het up that squash pie this week, an' unly sold tew slices."

"Countin' the slice y' sole me," asked Sandy, as he yawned again, stretched, and scratched his head, to keep awake.

"Nah; I never count nothen I sell t' you. You don't pay cash," snarled Aleck, as he reached through the open door and placed the bell on the counter.

"Well, I ketched y' a mess uv frogs fer a slice, didn't I?"

"Frogs haint cash," snapped Aleck.

"Zat so," said Sandy. "Well, listen once, haint frogs green-backs?"

"Oh, slush," growled Aleck, "I 'spose that's anuther uv Joe Miller's jokes yer cracken, haint it?"

"Nope, Ayer's Almanac, afore th' war," said Sandy, laughing. "How d' y' care fer them ole' hoss-chestnut ones, Aleck?"

Instead of answering, Aleck called to Bob Boscomb, the lean and lanky stage driver, crossing the square with the mail bag: "Hey, Bob, if there's any letter fer me, fetch it back with y'."

"What's in it?" asked Bob.

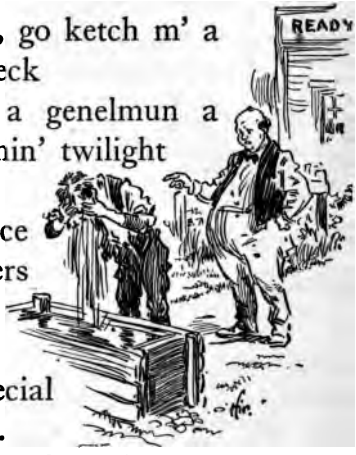
"A drink, th' same ez all'ez," shouted Aleck.

"Say, Bob, bring me a letter too, if there's a drink in it, will y'?" and Sandy wabbled to the horse trough to wash his face and hands, and "slick" his hair.

"Ef you want a drink, go ketch m' a mess uv frogs," said Aleck

"Well, can't y' give a genelmun a chance t' make his mornin' twilight first?"

"What y' washin' yer face fer, they didn' no strangers come," said Aleck, insinuating that Sandy only washed his face on special and important occasions.



"Well, I figured that if I washed m' face I might look like a stranger t' that squash pie, an' keep it from getin' discouraged," said Sandy, as he used his coat tail for a towel, and combed his hair with his fingers.

"I don't see what y' sneaked back t' town agin fer, enyway; yer wife got 'shet' uv y' by law, tew weeks ago."

"An' she ort t' bin rid uv m' ten year ago, when y' started m' t' drinkin' that 'rot-gut' rum uv yourn," replied Sandy.

"She ort t' had y' locked up insted uv takin' in boarders t' support y'. I'd liked t' had her fer a wife m'self."

"Say, Aleck, afore Mirandy Talbut ud 'hitch' to an old widderer full of frogs,

like you,"—and the several handfuls of cold water, which Sandy had splashed into his face, so revived his interest in life as to stimulate in him such a good opinion of himself, that, as a consequential effect, he actually swaggered his way back to the wooden bench, as he finished his reply to Aleck, saying: "Why, she'd marry me over again."

"Well, all hail th' day when Boscomb's Corners is 'shet' uv you fer good," said Aleck, as he waddled his three hundred pounds of flesh toward the pump.

"Well, 'f I took up as much uv th' town ez you do I'd git out an' give th' rest uv th' folks a chance," retorted Sandy.

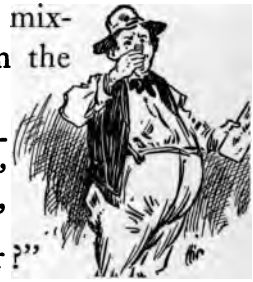
"Now, don't git off no slurs 'bout my size. I'm drinkin' warter here every day t' reduce it."

"Yes, pump warter; why don't y' go over t' th' Sanitarium an' drink that sine'tific warter; too stingy, aint y'?"

"Mine jer bizniss," snapped Aleck, and while he was pouring a second dipperful into his system, Bob returned with

a large, important looking envelope, which he held toward Aleck, saying: "Here's yer letter," and at the same time he gave him a sharp, quick tap on the stomach with the butt end of the "black snake" whip.

"What in Sam-hic-Hill y' doin'; now yuv started m' hic-pupin agin," said Aleck, unable to keep the "hics" from mixing in, like an extra syllable in the middle of a word.



"Hicupin is 'bout th' only exercise you git, haint it, Aleck?" remarked Sandy. "Whose th' letter from, some anti-fat doctor?"

" 'Taint fer me 'tall; hicks fer my son, William Henry Har-ick-son Stripe, smartixt lawyer in th' state uv Indeeanee. He's over t' th' San'tarium-bum on legal business fer Mrs. Ar-lic-ton, th' rich blind lady. It's 'bout her husband's will, I spose. My boy Willyum-bum Henry Har-ick-son"—

"Oh, we've all heered you brag 'bout yer 'Bill Hank Harry' son, but how 'bout my boy, Walter," asked Sandy, with a flourish of pride.

"I hear 'es goin' t' run you out uv town."

"What! Drive me, his dad," exclaimed Sandy, indignantly. Then he suddenly confessed to himself, the "good-for-nothing" that he was, by saying meekly, in a low tone: "Well, maybe I do deserve it."

"Y' best hurry up-pup, an' ketch them frogs afore I sour agin y', an' cut off yer lic-kick-er," sneered Aleck.

"Oh, I haint skeerd; frog eatin' is secon' nater with you. You've got a wuss appeetite fer frogs un I've got fer rum."

As Sandy finished speaking, Bob commenced to laugh, and Aleck, who had just started toward the lunch room door, turned partly around, and growled at Bob, "Bur-rur-rur!"

"I aint laughin' at you, I'm a laughin' at one uv Joe Miller's jokes," said Bob.

"Tell it out," said Sandy. "Tell it out."

"I can't remember whut twuz 'bout, but twuz funny," and Bob laughed more heartily than before.

"How ken y' laff at a joke what y' can't reco-lem-bember," said Aleck, "you mus' be a laffin hyena."

"Let 'im alone," said Sandy, "any fool

ken laugh at what he remembers, but it takes a perty smart feller t' laugh at what he fergits."

"Well, come in-ick, Bob, an' I'll give yic that drink t' shut y' up-pup," said Aleck.

"Me, too?" asked Sandy.

"Nah," snapped Aleck, "nuthen but pump warter fer you 'til y' fetch-etch them frog-hogs, an' ketch um fat, too."

Sandy reluctantly pumped a dipper of water, and after making faces at it before taking a swallow, managed to get it down, with a shudder, and an expression used only by small boys, in the spring of the year, just after taking a dose of sulphur and molasses.

The "Wee" One Brings Some "Scorned" Beef For Her Dad.

Sandy was down on his hands and knees getting his frog catching outfit from under the wooden bench—a battered tin pail, a hook and line, and a piece of red flannel—when his little daughter, Janie, touched him on the shoulder, and said: "Hello! dad." With Sandy on his knees, he was just the height of Janie, so, they kissed, while handiest to each other.

"Wee-wee's got a new sun bunit, haint she?" and Sandy smiled, and was glad.

"Yep, an' new shews, tew," and she held her dress back against her knees, put her feet close together, and looked down at them with pride.

"That's cuz yer ole drunken dad haint 'loud t' drink up yer maw's money no more," and Sandy smiled, and was glad all over, and leaned back to admire the new shoes with copper toes.

"I heered y' come back t' town las' nite; where bouts did y' sleep?"

"I tried fer t' sleep here, but m' back bone kep me 'wake mos' th' time," and he laughed as he rapped the board bench with his knuckles, saying: "Hear how soft it aint;" then he sat down and drew her to him.

"I wuz a wonderin' all nite where y' cud be; onest I thort I heered y' whisslin' but twuz th' win'," and as she looked up into her father's blood-shot eyes, he tried to wink away the watery evidence of a strong weakness he had always had for his little girl, and she said: "Does they hurt y', dad?"

"Guess they's weak from wantin' sleep," said Sandy, and dried them on his coat sleeve; then he put his arm around her, and patted her on the shoulder, as he said: "Now, done you lay 'wake lissnin fer me t' whissle no more, yer maw don't."

"I brung y' some san'ichis, scorned beef an' ham," and she untied the string on a small package and unwrapped the paper.

"Gee! whoppers, tew,

aint they?" said Sandy, as Janie handed him one, which he admired on both sides and the edges. "Spicions like yer maw made um; did she?"

Janie looked down, and did not reply.

Sandy repeated the question.

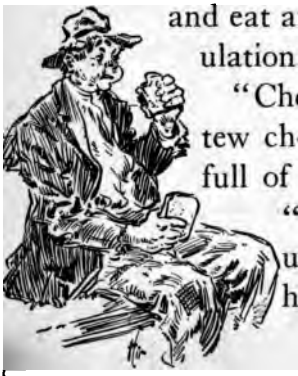
Then, without looking up, she said: "She tole me not t' tell."

Sandy had just time to straighten out the smile on his face before she raised her eyes.

"She did? Well, then, don't y'," he said, and then put a scallop in the sandwich that made Janie wonder whether the two would be enough.

"Maw's all fixed up t'day," said Janie, "Walter's goin' away, an' she's goin' t' ride over an' back in th' stage, in a bran' new dress."

When Sandy replied he tried to talk and eat at the same time, and his articulation wasn't to be depended on.



"Cheese geserved a jew dress fer tew cheers," he said, with a mouth full of "scorned" beef and bread. "Th' way I've shrank 'er money up, Wee-wee, zits a won'er che haint naked."

"Say, git start-art-ed fer them fro-hogs, will y-ick," shouted Aleck, from the door.

Between Aleck, trying to talk with the hic-coughs, and Sandy with a mouth full of sandwiches, Janie needed an interpreter.

"Well, skive a yenelmun askanse t' flimish 'is skinner first," and Sandy cocked his hat on the side of his head, crossed his legs, and leaned back, with an air of importance.

"Din-in-er? Y' haint had breck-eck-fast yit," hicked Aleck.

"I meetin' m' tinner afore reckfust soze t' shave my reckfust fer slupper."

"Here comes yer wid-did-er, Sandy," said Aleck, pointing toward the corner; "guess she spi-eyed y', an' wants t' give y' a piece uv 'er mind."

Sandy had no desire for a "mouth match" with Mrs. Talbut, and stuffing the rest of the sandwich into his face, he gathered up his frog catching outfit, and said to Janie: "Scum on, I'll sketch a smess fer yer maw, chew; an' if che axts y' who sketched um, say, I tole y' not t' tell."

—oo—

The "Hic-ups" Are Mixed Up With Mrs. Talbut's Strong Wrong Stress.

It was very evident that Mrs. Miranda Talbut had spied her ex-husband, for she came toward the pump holding her fan before her face.

She was of such a positive nature that, in order to be more impressive, she would resort to an extravagant emphasis of syllables and words, causing her to make some distressingly awkward pronunciations, and to wreck all possible euphony.

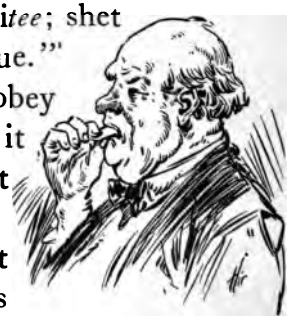
In saying "an extravagant emphasis of syllables" her emphasis would explode in about the following places: "An *ex*-trav-*agant* em-*pha*-sis of sylla-*bells*."

When she reached a spot near to where she figured Sandy was then standing, she stopped, and said: "San*dee* Tal*but*, don't *ex*pose yer rum *soaked* coun*ta*nance *to* me, an' git out of *this* town."

Instead of Sandy, it was Aleck Stripe, with his hic-coughs, who

was standing a little to the left of Mrs. Talbut, and when she heard the first "hic," without looking from behind her fan, she commenced: "You *rab*scall*yun*; drunk again; don't *you* dare to *con*verse *with* me.'"

What Aleck intended to say was: "Welcome, widow, welcome," but what the "hics" made him say, was: "Wel-hell come, widder," which was as far as he got, for Mrs. Talbut exclaimed: "How dare you *in*sult me with sech *pro*fani*tee*; shet cher mouth, an' *hole* yer tongue.'"



After several attempts to obey orders, Aleck discovered that it was impossible to do both at the same time.

When his mouth was shut he couldn't get hold of his tongue, and when he had hold of his tongue he couldn't get his mouth shut.

"Which-itch d' y' want m' t' do fust?" said Aleck.

"Gra*shuss* good*ness* me! It's *Mr.* Stripe," gasped the widow, as she recognized his voice.

"Thort twuz Sandy, did-iden y'? No, I haint Sandy, but-tut I wan' t' tell y' that

I'm willin' t' begin where Sandy lef-teft off, eny time yer ready."

"Well! Al*ex*an*der* Stripe, you ole *bab*-boon! If I'd bin a wid*o* fer ten years, I could*dent* mus*ter* up eve*un* a *ex*pre*shun* of *af*ec*shun* fer *you*," and Mrs. Miranda Talbut's indignation rose from beneath her collar in a blaze of red that seemed to spread all over her head.

Again a "hic" tricked him into saying the word "well" so that it sounded like something else, and the widow said: "Don't cher swear *at* me *a*gen."

"I haint swearin, wid-did-er," said Aleck, "I'm hicup-pupin. I'd make-ache a good advertisement fer yer boardin' hou-souse."

"It's too expen*sive* advertise-*mentin* fer me," said the widow, as she looked toward Aleck. His face was inflated like a toy balloon.

"What th' matter ails y'," she exclaimed.

The stage driver, who had been leaning over the fence and taking in the conversation, remarked: "He's tryin' ter kermit sewerside by th' blowin' out uv his breath, I guess."

"Y' fool; I'm stoppin hicup-pupin."

"Gra*shus* good*ness!* People has *ex*-pired with hic*ups*. A hy*dro*pathist tole me t' alus drink water fer hic*ups*," and she pumped a dipper full and passed it to him.

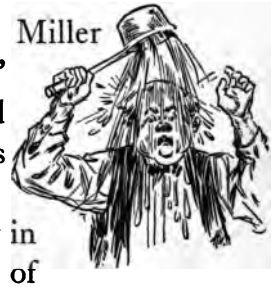
"Warter!" exclaimed Aleck: "Criminee crackee-ackee, that's how I got em."

"Well, y' know th' ole rema*dee*," said the widow, "th' hair uv *the* dog *what* bit y'."

"Go ahead, Aleck; a dipper full uv hair ort t' be good fer most en'thing," said the stage driver.

"Say, widder, is it a joke-oke 'bout Joe Miller-iller goin' t' leave town," asked Aleck.

"Joke? No, *in*deed; Joe Miller *de*parts from town t'mor*ro*."



Aleck was so overjoyed that he threw up his hands and shouted, "Halleujah!"

He forgot about the dipper in his hand, full of the "hair of the dog that bit him," and it came down all over him.

"Too bad that hair won't stick t' yer head, Aleck," said the stage driver.

"Shet yer trap, y' slat," snarled Aleck.

"See, yer *pun*ished by yer *own* han' fer

bein' glad, *when* y' ort t' be sor*ree*," said the widow, with a rich smile of satisfaction.

"Well, I'm sick uv hearin' his ole almanac jokes an' fool talk," he said with an ugly sneer.

"But Mr. Shakespeare says, it takes a smart man to be a fool."

"Shake-hake-spear," repeated Aleck, with a mystified look, "when wuz he here?"

"Sech igne*rence* is positive*lee* heart-*rendering*," and Mrs. Talbut had to fan herself to keep both her temper and temperature from rising.

"He aint a biz-ziz-niss man; bein' a comic-hick aint a bizniss: makin' a lot uv fools laugh aint a job-bob."

"Well, sellin' mue*sic* boxes to *at*tach on*to* sewin' *may*sheenes is a biz*ness*, an' I tuck one," she said, proudly.

"Yes, an' 'es boardin-oredin it out at yer house, aint 'e?" said Aleck, with an insinuating grin.

" 'Cause I can't *a*ford t' pay cash; an' if

he'd stay tew weeks long*er* I'd be tempt*ted* t' take *a*nuther jest t' keep 'im in *the* kermunei*tee*," and Mrs. Talbut reached for the dipper to refresh herself with a few swallows of pump water.

"I wouldn' edvise yer tew, widder, caze folk-oaks might say more'n they cud preuve."

As Aleck finished speaking, the dipper was on its way from the end of the pump spout to Mrs. Talbut's mouth, and she had intended using it exclusively for drinking out of, but this insinuation caused her to change its course; luckily for Aleck, it went over his head.

What result her indignation would have recorded upon Aleck will never be known, for her son called to her from the corner, "Here! Mother! Hold on, there," and in another minute he was standing between them, saying: "What's the trouble—let me settle this."

"Wal*ter*, my boy, do *for*give yer moth*er* fer stop*ping* here *and* not mind*ing* her own biz*ness*, an' mix*ing* you up in her trou*bells*."

"Your troubles? Why, mother, you know I never was so happy as when I was punching some fellow who had sassed you," and he stepped toward Aleck with a hard fist in each hand.

"I warn y' not t' strike an invalid," said Aleck, "I've got th' hicup-pups."

"I can cure the hic-pups with one punch," said Walter, as he drew back his arm to administer the treatment.

"Wal*ter*, my boy, come *a*way," and his mother held him. "Come *a*way *be*fore you lose yer tem*per*."

"Young man, afore you leave town this day, my son, William Henry Harrison Stri-pipe 'ull 'tend t' you."

"That lawyer son of yours? Smartest lawyer in the State of Indiana," said Walter, sarcastically. "Well, when will William Henry be at liberty."

"Don't chu worry, he'll find y'; he kno-owes y' when he sees y'."

As Walter walked away with his mother, Bob, who was still leaning over the fence, said to Aleck: "What y' goin' t' do, Aleck, start William Henry in th' lemonade business?"

—oo—

Some Folks Grow To Look Like Whatever They Eat The Most Of.

The fence around the square, across from the Ready Relief, bore evidence that Bob Boscomb was the village "idle."

His initials were carved in so many places, people wondered how he had ever found time to drive the stage.

"B. B." was cut deep in all of the posts and in most of the boards.

After Aleck's retreat into the lunch room, Bob busied himself by excavating another "B. B.", with the "only generwine" buck-horn handle knife in town.

When sure the coast was clear, Aleck stuck his head out of the door and said: "Say, Bob, did y' see where that dip-hipper got t'?"

"What's in it," said Bob, anticipating that Aleck would ask him to find it.

"A drink, same ez alus," replied Aleck.

"They done look t' be no drink into it from here," replied Bob, pointing to the dipper hanging upside down in a tree.

"So, yur kitch-itchin th' joke disease tew, be y'?" snarled Aleck. "Say, aint that Joe Miller out there?" and he pointed across the square.

"Skylarkin' with Sandy's little girl?" asked Bob.

"Sky-highlarkin? Cutten 'di-does' like a jack-ackass, y' mean," and Aleck banged the door of the lunch room behind him.

"Go it, Joe," shouted Bob, as Joe ran past him, with a music box under his arm, and his hat in his hand, in pursuit of Janie, who dodged around the pump and seated herself on the wooden bench, all out of breath, and fanning with her sun bonnet.

"No fair! Y' can't tag me now, 'cause I'm a techin wood, an' got m' fingers crossed," she said, talking and laughing at the same time.

"Didn't y' tag me when I fell over th' water pail, an' had m' feet crossed?" and Joe laughed, and gasped for breath.

"Oh! you did look so funny fallin' in th' warter pail," laughed Janie.

"I was just a drop in the bucket;"

and as he rubbed his elbow, Janie asked, "Did y' hurt y'sef?"

"Skinned my funny bone, I guess."

"Yer funny bone?" repeated Janie. "Why, Aleck Stripe sez y' haint got a funny bone in yer body."

"No? Well, he's too fat t' be a judge of bones, Janie."

"When y' crossed th' bridge, did y' see dad down under it fishin' fer frogs?"

"No, but I felt him, though," replied Joe. "When I was most across th' bridge, Sandy pulled up his line, and went to throw in again, and caught me here in the the coat tail," and Joe showed her the hook in the tail of his coat. "I cut the line, and I'll bet he don't know where his hook is yet."

"I wished I'd a bin there t' seen it," and she tried to help him to get the hook loose.

"I wish y' had been there, Janie," he said; then he looked at her with a twinkle in his eye, and added: "You could have seen Sandy Hook."

Joe sometimes joked just from force of habit, and this was one of the times.

He didn't expect Janie to laugh, because he knew she had never heard of the marine station of Sandy Hook.

While she was still working to get the hook out of his coat tail he could not resist the temptation to say: "Do you see the point?"

The innocence and fitness or her answer, "Not yet, I guess you'll have to cut it out," started Joe into a side-splitting laugh that ended in a fit of coughing.

"All right, Janie," he said, "the next time I try to tell you a joke about a fish hook, I will cut it out," and he placed the music box on the bench, and seated himself beside her.

Janie changed the subject, saying: "Say, Mr. Miller, Bob sez dad 's gettin' rats."

"Well, maybe he is gettin' rats, Janie; I heard him out last night makin' a noise like a cat, maybe he is gettin' rats."

"Bob sez dad never will git th' best uv whiskey."

"Oh, I don't know, Janie,

I used t' drink whiskey, and I got the best of whiskey."

"Y' did?" she asked, with an anxiousness to know "how."

"Yes, Janie, I got th' best of whiskey, until th' best of whiskey got th' best of me," said Joe, thoughtfully, "then I had to get the worst whiskey I could buy, in order to get the best of it; and if I hadn't got the worst of it, I never would have gotten the best of it."

"Oh, Mr. Miller, did you ever drink whiskey like Pop?"

"Like pop? Yes, indeed, and out of a pop bottle, too."

"An' y' stopped a drinkin' fer good?"

"Yes, excepting when I have a cold."

"Why couldn't dad do that way; jest drink when he has a cold.?"

"No, Janie, he'd have th' whooping cough the year round. I'll have another talk with him before I leave, and try to make him see things right."

"That's what dad needs, Mr. Miller, t' see things right; cause lately he's been seein' things what aint right."

"In his mind?" asked Joe.

"No, in his boots," replied Janie.

"Oh," and Joe had to turn his face away for a moment, until he could get rid of a smile; then he continued: "that's all right, Janie; I've seen th' same things in my boots, many a time. Why, I used to have to take my boots off and empty them, three times a day."

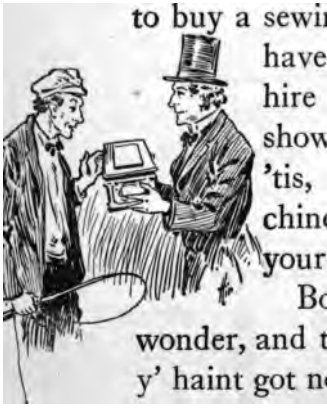
"An' wuz you gettin' rats?" she asked.

"Rats? Janie, I had a hull menagerie."

"Oh, I wish mom knowed that dad aint ez wuss ez you wuz."

"Joe, I hear yer goin' t' quit us," said Bob, as he returned with the dipper.

"Yes, around here the folks who would like to have a music box on their sewing machines never had money enough to buy a sewing machine, and those who have money to buy a machine, hire their sewing done. I didn't show it to you yet, did I? Here 'tis, fastens onto a sewing machine and makes music while your wife makes a shirt."



Bob listened, and looked in wonder, and then said: "Yes, but 'sposin y' haint got no wife t' fasten it onter?"

"You don't fasten it on your wife, y' fasten it on th' machine," explained Joe.

" 'Taint playin' nothin' yit," said Bob.

"Because I haven't lifted th' lid; y' see, Bob, this is a New York music box, and it dasent play when th' lid is on;" then he opened the cover and started the music. "Aint that fine," said Joe, "beats keeping a canary bird; no cage, no seed, no feed, never dies, and sings forever."

From the door of the Ready Relief came Aleck's grouchy voice and hiccoughs. "Souns like a coffee grind-hinder t' me; I'd ruther listen t' fro-hogs."

"That's because you can eat frogs, and you can't eat this music box," said Joe.

To give Joe his very meanest look of contempt, Aleck drew his mouth down so far that each corner joined the wrinkle in his double chin, and gave him the appearance of having a "frog neck."

Joe looked at Aleck for a moment, and then said: "Say, Bob, they do say that some people grow to look like whatever they eat the most of."

"Zat so?" growled Aleck. "Well, I eat ez much roast beef ez I dew frogs."

"That's right, then," said Joe, agreeing, "that makes your combination correct: a bull frog."

Bob started to laugh and shout: "He's got y' Aleck! Y' can't git back at Joe."

"I aint claimin' t' be no comicer; but, if I didn't have these here hicup-pups"—

"You haven't got the hic-ups," said Joe, "those are frogs inside of y', croaking."

"Joe Miller," shouted Aleck, in a howling rage, "I'll have my son, Willyum-bum Harrison Stri-pipe flog you fur that."

"Don't get excited, Aleck, sit down, and listen to yourself croak," and Joe and Janie walked away, keeping time to the music of a "two-step."

"Say, Aleck," said Bob, "aint y' kinder overworkin' yer William Henry," and Aleck slammed the door so hard that it bounced wide open again, and when he tried to kick it shut, he missed it, and fell flat on his back—and he couldn't get up until Bob rolled him over and pushed his knees under him.

—oo—

A Loving Son,
And a Loving Miss, a Five Dollar Bill,
And a Loving Kiss.

Walter Talbut's acquaintance with Mrs. Arlington's daughter, Mildred, began when the young man left school, and went to Indianapolis to seek employment, and found it, in her uncle's wholesale house; and now, that Mrs. Arlington and Mildred were spending a few weeks at the Sanitarium, but a short mile from "the Corners," Walter spent his "off days" at home, making the most of his opportunity to pay his attentions to Mildred, and to her mother.

His present visit, however, was being made rather unpleasant by the presence of Mrs. Arlington's attorney, Mr. William Henry Harrison Stripe, who monopolized a great deal of their time.

A few moments after Bob had helped the elder Mr. Stripe to be "up right," Walter and Mildred strolled across the square, and when they reached the pump

Walter was complaining: "Mildred, you know I leave today, and that the stage goes in less than an hour, and now I find your time taken up by that Henry Stripe."

"Mr. Stripe's legal services, Walter, permit him to ask a great many questions; don't be jealous. I have promised myself to you, haven't I?"

"Yes, with your uncle's consent," and the discouraged tone of Walter's voice indicated that he considered "Uncle's consent" a strong string tied to Mildred's promise.

"You know Uncle John likes you; he has promoted you twice."

"But that is business," said Walter, impatiently, "while this is — is — Well, I know all right," he continued, "I ought to; I haven't had any appetite for a month," and he heaved a deep sigh, but whether from his heart or his stomach, his expression was indefinite.

"And I haven't been eating so well, lately, either," said she; and Mildred's misery, added to his, seemed to make him feel much better.

"I wrote your uncle a letter several days ago," he said, brightening up, and trying to look cheerful.

"Asking his consent," said Mildred.

"Well, not exactly," replied Walter. "I asked him what kind of a man he would choose for a husband for his niece. I expect his reply today. It may be here now."

They turned in the direction of the post office, and Walter stopped almost before he had started.

Some distance from them he saw the young attorney, wheeling Mrs. Arlington in the rolling chair.

Walter and Mildred exchanged glances, and their expressions were well matched for a duet of the dumps.

"Now, he has left your mother and is coming this way, to meet you alone, I suppose. Oh, I'd like to start something," and the fist on his right wrist was clenched and raised.

"Now, Walter, please control your temper. He is expecting me with these papers, which I had to return to the Sanitarium to get."

Young Stripe raised his hand to get Mildred's attention, and then waited for her to join him.

Walter's anger was animal and eloquent.

He pawed the earth like a mad bull, grated his teeth, and growled like a challenged hound.

"Oh, I'd just like to take you by the ear as your father used to," said Mildred, stamping her foot, and scowling.

Her effort as an animal tamer was rewarded by Walter's "cooling off," and saying: "Well, don't talk to him any more than is necessary, and don't stay away any longer than you have to."

"I promise," and as Mildred hurried away, Walter's father stepped out from behind a large maple, but a few yards from the old board bench, and said to his boy: "Hello! Bud; how be y'?"

"Hello, dad!" said Walter, with a welcome that warmed clear up into his eyes, and while Walter was shaking his father by the hand, he stopped suddenly, and said: "Say, dad, have you been standing there all the time?"

"No, not all th' time," said Sandy, "I've

bin fishin' some uv th' time. I jest got 'round in hearin when m' name wuz sed 'bout takin' y' by th' ear. 'Twern't no harm, wuz it? I didn' want t' show up afore her, cuz she needn' t' know I'm yer dad, if y' don't want her to."

"Have you made up your mind what's best for you to do, dad? Have you got some place to go," and Walter put his hand gently on his father's shoulder.

"Where to, Bud? I wuz never t' no place, 'cept here an'— an' th' woods over by th' creek, when I wuz 'spreein'—an' Sheldon's barn frosty nights. He alus ud let me in. Some sed as how you wuz goin' t' drive me out uv here."

"Who said that, dad?"

"Aleck, an' some th' boys."

"It's a lie, dad," and the hair stood up on the back of Walter's neck, so to speak.

"I knowed 'twuz, Bud," and Sandy's voice was husky, and his lower lip trembled. "So I sez I'll hang 'roun 'till he comes, and jest prove it."

"And I'm glad y' did, dad. I've not had much time to think what's best to do."

"Don't bother 'bout me; think uv her,

Bud. She's a little fairy angel on feet."

"Who, dad?"

"Little Mill'red Arlin'ton," replied Sandy, smiling, and digging Walter in the ribs with his thumb.

"Same old dad, aint y'?" and the playful whack on the shoulder that Walter gave his father shook up the frogs in the pail so, that for a minute, Sandy was kept busy preventing the escape of Aleck's meal.

"Frogs I ketched fer yer maw," said Sandy, after recapturing the last escape. "Ketched some fer Aleck, tew. I git a dime a mess from him, in trade."

"In trade," repeated Walter, shaking his head, reproachfully. "Could I trust you with this, dad?" and Walter held a five dollar bill in his hand.

"I'll do m' best, Bud," and Sandy's fingers twitched, and his eyelids almost clicked, he blinked so fast.

Walter handed him the bill, saying: "Then I'll take all the frogs home to mother. Now, pull yourself together, dad, and make the best of things. I'm coming

home again next week," he said. "That will see you through 'till then; and, dad, don't hang around this place of Stripe's."

"Shall I take th' pledge again?"

"No, just redeem one of the old ones," and as Walter started to go, Mildred stepped in front of him.

"Walter, I have been standing there listening to every word you said to your father."

Before he could speak, Sandy said: "I bin deevorsed from 'im by law, Miss, his mother zis father now," and with this well meant but mixed intent to release Walter from any relationship, Sandy went his way.

Walter did not hang his head; if anything, he raised it a little higher, and said: "Well, Mildred, he is my father, and whatever you have to say to me, I"—

"I have just this to say to you," and she took his face between her hands, and gave him a solid kiss, squarely on the lips.

"Well, can you beat that!" exclaimed a familiar voice behind them,

and they both turned, to face Joe Miller. "Say," he continued, with pretended importance, "what do you two think this is, the park after dark?"

"Well, any girl would have done the same, Mr. Miller, if she had seen Walter do what I did."

"My! Did Walter do what you just did?"

"I mean his noble conduct toward his father," she replied.

"I only gave dad a five dollar bill to keep him from trading these frogs for liquor," said Walter.

"What! A five dollar bill," gasped Joe, "to keep him from trading the frogs for liquor? Well, say, what do you think he is going to trade that five dollars off for, sassaprilla? He'll keep this town up nights for a month; someone will have to stand guard around here, that's all. Well, you two go on with your cake-walk, and when the cake is cut, send me a slice, will y'?"

After they had gone, Joe did "picket" duty, and was on the watch for Sandy's return.

—oo—

Rum Tempts Sandy
But Joe is Handy, and Balks
"John Barley Corn."

The "battle with the bottle" was a hard one for Sandy.

He couldn't leave the five dollar bill in his pocket a minute without feeling to find whether it was still there, and taking it out and turning it over, to see whether both sides were still on it.

He had folded, unfolded and refolded it, until he had worn holes in all the creases.

He dodged his first desire to drink with an abrupt determination, also the second and third, but, after a half hour of these victories, he told himself that the way to find out his real strength would be to take just one drink first, and then show folks how he could let it alone.

He was so busy watching, for fear Walter would see him, that he bumped into Joe, with the five dollar bill in his hand.

In his surprise and nervousness he stammered and sputtered, and tried to pass a counterfeit laugh and a forged smile off on Joe as genuine.

"Will y' take this five dollar bill, Joe, I'm afraid t' keep it," he said.

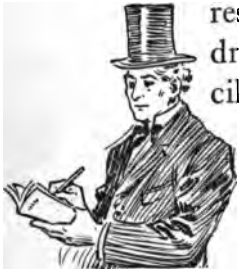
"You mean you're afraid y' can't keep it," and Joe took the money from Sandy.

"Walter give it t' m', t' see m' through."

"Through? Yes, through," repeated Joe, "and there you were going to commence again."

"I wuz only goin' t' take one drink."

"What were you going to do with the rest, throw them on y' and let them dry in?" and Joe was busy penciling something in a note book.



"The reason I drink so much whiskey, Joe, is"—

Without looking up from the note book, Joe replied: "The reason is, because you can't spread it on your bread and eat it." Then he showed the note book to Sandy, and read to him what he had written: "'Five dollars deposited to the credit of Sandy Talbut in th' first bank started at Boscomb's Corners'; aint y' proud of yourself?"

Sandy fingered an old empty whiskey bottle in his coat pocket, and looked beaten and bewildered.

An idea struck him and he exclaimed: "Y' bet I'm proud; an' I guess I'll draw twenty-five cents from th' bank."

Joe could see that Sandy had his fingers on the empty flask, and he tried to think of some banking rule for not letting Sandy have the money.

Suddenly taking out his watch, Joe said: "It's too late, Sandy. It's after three o'clock; bank's closed," and started to walk away,

"Now, Joe," pleaded Sandy.

"No, it's too late; the bank's goin' home. This is a young bank, and it can't stay out late," and to emphasize his decision, he buttoned his coat all the way up. "All banks have th' same rules. If it's after hours when you come after yours, you don't get yours. No, sir; when you come after 'ours,' you don't get yours," and as Joe took the empty flask from Sandy's coat pocket, he repeated "you don't get yours," put the bottle in his own pocket, and walked away.

"Well, can't I draw nuthen out uv th' bank," pleaded Sandy.

"Not a thing," replied Joe, positively; then, going slowly to the wooden bench, he sat down, but stood up again much quicker than he sat down—as he received a sharp reminder that Sandy's fish hook was still in his coat tail.

"Jerusalem; there's that fish hook of yours," and he brought the coat tail around in front of him, saying: "You can draw that out of the bank if you want to."

While Sandy was releasing the hook Aleck shouted from the door: "Say, did y' kitch-itch them fro-hogs?"

"He's just taking one off the hook."

Paying no attention to Joe's joke, Aleck snapped out: "Well, hurry up," and slammed the door.

When Sandy told Joe that Walter had taken all the frogs home to his "maw," Joe said: "Then listen; you take me in and say to Aleck: 'This is the only frog left in all the ponds,' and when he says 'What ponds?' you say 'Extract,'" and Joe smiled with satisfaction, thinking of the

laugh they all would have at Aleck's expense. But there was an emptiness in the look on Sandy's face, which meant that, so far as any joke was concerned, he had drawn a blank.

With the innocence and helplessness of a child, he said to Joe: "What fur?"

"What for?" exclaimed Joe. "What for? Why, it's a joke, don't you understand?" But Sandy kept looking at Joe with a "wall-eyed," baby stare, until Joe's smile changed to a look of alarm.

"Say, the way you look at me makes me think I'm wrong," and, after getting no response from Sandy, he continued: "Well, the way you look at me one of us is wrong, that's a sure thing. Listen, frogs live in ponds, don't they?" and Sandy nodded his head, without shutting his eyes. "Pond's Extract you rub on y'?" and Sandy again nodded, with that same petrified expression. "Well, don't y' see, the question is 'What ponds', and the answer is 'Extract.'"

When Sandy did laugh, he laughed so much louder than the joke deserved, Joe

stopped him just before entering the lunch room and said: "Now, wait a minute. What do y' say?"

Boldly, and with smiling confidence, Sandy replied: "Witch Hazel."

Joe staggered backward, but the fence post kept him from falling.

By the lapel of his coat he gathered Sandy close to him, and, pointing the first finger of his left hand almost into the flesh on his face, said, with intensity enough to burn the word into his brain: "EXTRACT," and then rushed him in quickly, for fear of his forgetting it.

Joe Miller, Joker, Larrups William Henry with Sharp Gibes of Sarcasm.

About the same time that Sandy was getting tangled up in Joe's frog pond joke, young Stripe was wheeling Mrs. Arlington toward his father's "inebriator," the Ready Relief, because Mildred had returned in that direction to meet Walter.

Young Stripe had a personal interest in Mildred, not included in his legal services to the family, which meant to him more money than all the lawyers' fees he could collect for the balance of his life.

"This is the public square we are now crossing, Mrs. Arlington," he said.

"Thank you, Mr. Stripe. This is very kind of you, very kind."

"It is a pleasure to be of service to you, Mrs. Arlington, or to your daughter, Mildred."

"Since the death of my son, Mildred is all I have left."

"And soon she will be taking the step

that her mother once took, 'for better or for worse,'" he said.

"Marriage? Oh, Mildred has plenty of time yet, plenty of time," she replied.

"There is Mildred now, walking with young Talbut. Had we not better join them," he suggested, with eagerness that betrayed his motive.

"No, no. It's just the same now as it was when I was a girl, 'two is company.' Do you know young Mr. Talbut?"

"When we were boys here in this village together I knew him slightly, but I have not seen much of him of late."

He was watching Mildred and Walter so intently that he stopped rolling the chair. "They are going to the post office."

"Let us wait for them here, then. They will return this way," said the mother.

Young Stripe left Mrs. Arlington, and walked a few paces to the fence, where he could better see the movements of Mildred and Walter.

"When will you have all the papers ready for me to sign, Mr. Stripe," but he was so absorbed in his watching that he did not reply, until she spoke his name again.

"Oh! yes, yes, Mrs. Arlington. Pardon me," and he returned quickly to the side of the chair. "My shoe came untied, and I was trying to tie a— a— double knot. Yes, the papers, well, in a few days Mrs. Arlington. I am preparing a complete list of all the property," then he returned to the fence and resumed his watching.

He was all eyes and no ears, and did not even hear Bob Boscomb's wild war-whoop of laughter, that almost raised the roof of the Ready Relief. Nor did he hear Joe, as he shouted back through the door, to those inside: "That's th' last time I ever make up a joke for you, Mr. Sandy." Then, seeing Mrs. Arlington, Joe removed his hat and greeted her as cheerfully as though nothing had happened to rile his ire. "Well, well, Mrs. Arlington, bless your heart, how are you?"

"Quite well, thank you, Mr. Miller. You seem happy, as usual."

"Well, I was happy until Sandy just spoiled my frog ponds extract joke. Aleck asked

'What pond's,' all right, and Sandy said 'Liniment!' "

"Liniment? And what should he have said," asked Mrs. Arlington.

"Extract," replied Joe. "Just, Extract."

"Oh, well, that was somewhere near it. He might have done worse," she said, to console him.

"Might have?" repeated Joe. "He did. He no sooner had said 'Extract,' than he shouted 'that's wrong, it's arnica.' "

"Have you met Mr. Henry Stripe, my attorney," she said.

As there was nothing in the air, on the other side of the chair, where Mrs. Arlington's left hand indicated that she supposed her attorney to be, Joe blinked his eyes at the vacant space, and replied "No, I haven't. Where is he?"

Again Mrs. Arlington had to repeat his name a second time before he came out of his trance at the fence and came to the side of the chair, saying: "Yes—yes—Mrs. Arlington, here I am."

"Excuse me," she said. "I had forgotten that your shoe was untied, and that you were trying to tie a double knot."

Joe looked down at the riding boots

worn by young Stripe. There wasn't a sign of a lace about them.

When they faced each other, it was as well for Mrs. Arlington just then that she could not see to read the language of their eyes, or she would have had to demand their apology for using silent profanity in the presence of a lady.

The battle was brief and Joe was the master, for a lying eye is always licked when it tries to look too long into the face of an honest man.

"This is Mr. Miller, Mr. Stripe," said Mrs. Arlington, and for her sake they exchanged formalities. "Mr. Stripe is my lawyer," she continued. "He is preparing papers for me to sign, transferring my late husband's estate to me. I dread the responsibility."

"Well, worriment is the penalty of riches," replied Joe, "and yet," he added, "we all seem to like to be worried, don't we."

"It does seem that way," replied the widow. "My son, who was killed at the

battle of Manila, had control of all our property. It was always his father's wish, and he so named it in his will, that the oldest male member of our family should always have control of our property," and Mrs. Arlington felt for a document that was lying in her lap, and held it out for Joe to take, saying: "This is a copy of my husband's will, Mr. Miller. Now, we have no male member in our family, and that is why, you see, the estate is to be transferred to me."

"Well," said Joe, while he ran his eye over the clause in the will that covered the point she had just mentioned, "a husband for Mildred might be a handy thing to have in the house, to peel potatoes and tear off coupons."

"Yes, that's true," laughed the widow, "and if he were honest and capable he could relieve me of all this care."

"And if he wasn't," replied Joe, "he could relieve you of all your money. Take a fool's advice, Mrs. Arlington, and get this property into your own hands at once. With this transfer unsigned,

if Mildred should be so unfortunate as to lose her heart to some sweet faced scoundrel, you would lose your fortune to the oldest male member of the family," and he folded and returned the document to Mrs. Arlington.

"What do you say to that, Mr. Stripe?" she asked.

As William Henry did not reply, Joe said: "Is your shoe untied again?" but young Stripe's neck was stretched over the fence, and he did not hear. Then Joe turned to Mrs. Arlington and said: "I guess he's tying a hard knot this time."

From the boquette, lying in her lap, Mrs. Arlington took a pink carnation, and said: "Let me give you a flower for your coat, Mr. Miller," and as Joe accepted it, she added: "My Mildred thinks we should choose the carnation for our national flower."

That irresistible "force of habit" brought a fitting reply from Joe. "Well, say, Mrs. Arlington, so do I; and the why because is, that with our fast trains, automobiles and trolley cars, our nation is a car-nation."

When Mrs. Arlington laughed it gave Joe courage to say: "If I had known you wanted to be wheeled over here this morning I'd been ready to be your motorman before breakfast."

"Thank you, Mr. Miller. I shall always remember your kindness to me, but Mr. Stripe volunteered his services."

"Volunteered?" repeated Joe, and then for her amusement he tried to sing a few bars of a popular song: "He don't belong to the regulars, he's just a volunteer," but his voice cracked so on the last word, that he gave it up, saying: "Did you hear that frozen tear in my throat," and when Mrs. Arlington laughed again, he took still more courage, and said: "I'm going to wheel you over to the drug store and get you something for my voice."

As he started to push the chair, young Stripe interfered, saying: "I beg your pardon, allow me."

"I beg your pardon, allow me," replied Joe, emphatically. "After me, my dear Alfonse."

"Shall not I wheel you, Mrs. Arlington," asked her attorney.

"You not shall," said Joe. Then looking down at the young man's riding boots, he said: "I think your shoe is untied again," and "William Henry Harrison" was left standing alone sharpening his upper teeth on his lower ones, while Joe wheeled Mrs. Arlington away in triumph.

—oo—

William Henry
Tells How He is Going to Marry Mildred and the Money.

Bob Boscomb came out of the Ready Relief to tell Joe that Sandy was still stuck, and couldn't think of the right "liniment" to use for the "arnica" joke, and, seeing William Henry, Bob called to his father: "Hey, Aleck! Here's yer cub, if y' want t' sick 'im onter Joe Miller and Sandy Talbut's boy." Then, to young Stripe, he said: "H'ar y', Bill; don't go way, cause this is goin' t' be yer busy day."

Just then a crowd began to collect around someone in front of the post office and Bob ran to join it.

"Hello, Bill; here's a letter fer y'; wuz gave t' me by mistake, by that 'bone head' post master uv ourn," and his father waddled to where Bill was standing watching Joe and Mrs. Arlington.

"So, that's Joe Miller, is it, dad?" asked Bill, pointing toward them.

"Yep, an' et looks ez zo he's kinder flirtin with th' widder, don't it, Bill?"

"It's a good thing for him that Mrs.

Arlington can't see. One glance at his shabby appearance would end his acquaintance," replied the son.

"How y' makin' out with her law bizniss, Bill?" asked Aleck, anxiously.

"Better than I expected," he replied. "What I told you about the will is right, and if I succeed in marrying Mildred, before Mrs. Arlington signs the transfer, I will become not only the oldest, but the only male member of the family, and, according to the will, I will control the entire property."

"How y' goin' t' work it, Bill," and the father's eyes bulged, and he rubbed his hands so hard, the palm of each one over the back of the other, that his knuckles were polished to a purple pink.

"Easily enough. Simply delay the signing of the transfer until I have won Mildred, then I will control a million in bonds and lands."

"I alus said as you wuz the smartest lawyer in th' state uv Ingeanee," said Aleck, chuckling, and patting his son

on the back, as Bob came running from the crowd at the corner.

"We've jest elected Joe Miller Mayor of Boscomb's Corners, by ack-lee-may-shun, so's t' keep 'im here. Lend us yer bell t' ring," wheezed Bob, full of enthusiasm, and out of breath.

"I wunt loan y' nuthin'," snarled Aleck. "How do y' know it's accordin' t' law."

"What d' we care whether 'tis er not," and, before Aleck could prevent him, Bob reached in the door, took the bell, and ran back toward the crowd, closely followed by Sandy, who got so excited and mixed on short notice, that he horrayed for Joe Liniment and Hazel Miller.

" 'Taint legal, is it, Bill?"

"Of course not," replied the son; "villages don't have Mayors."

"Come in a minute, Bill, I want t' tell y' what I want y' t' do t' this man Miller, an' t' that Talbut brat," and Bill and his father went in and arranged something "neat" for Walter and Joe.

—oo—

The First Mayor Sees Young Stripe Meet Walter Face to Fist.

Mildred and Walter were so interested in the contents of two letters, which Walter had just received from Mildred's uncle, that neither of them paid any attention to the "horrays" for Joe Miller.

In one letter the uncle named over several very necessary traits for a good husband to have, and among them "a sweet disposition," which Mildred immediately taunted Walter with not having when he grated his teeth at William Henry.

The other was a business letter, instructing Walter to engage a vinegar buyer for the firm, and explaining the knowledge about "apples and green stuff" that a vinegar buyer should have. While Walter was trying to think of a suitable man to fill the bill, an extra loud shout brought the crowd to his notice, and hearing Joe Miller's name, Walter said: "Joe's th' man; every one

wants to keep him here. See, Mildred," continued Walter, "the boys have put Joe in your mother's rolling chair."

"And, where can mother be," said Mildred, just a little frightened.

"In the drug store, of course, drinking a soda," replied Walter. "You go to her, and I'll join the crowd and bring the chair back."

Joe's horraying escort was headed for the pump, but at the same time it had its eyes on the "lunch and liquor" sign on the Ready Relief.

As they reached the pump, Joe stepped from the rolling chair, saying: "All right, boys, have your fun out. Now, as the Mayor of Boscomb's Corners, I invite you all to have a treat."

As the crowd rushed for the lunch room, he stepped in front of Sandy, and said: "All excepting Sandy Talbut. I just had his bottle filled at the drug store," and Joe handed Sandy the same whiskey flask, which he had taken from him a short while before.

When Sandy saw that the flask was really filled, his eyes gleamed and beamed, and he smacked his lips, and cuddled up to himself as he uncorked it.

"Here's t' th' Mayor of Boscomb's Corners," he shouted, and gulped down a mouthful.

No summer sea was ever more suddenly upset by a squall than was Sandy's joyous expression turned into disappointment, disgust and regret.

"What's that," he gasped, as he shuddered like an old ship, being shaken from stem to stern.

"Witch Hazel," said Joe, in a taunting triumph. "Witch Hazel!"

"Keep it up, dad; it's good for you," said Walter.

"No, keep it down," said Joe.

Bob had given Sandy the bell to ring, and, as he seated himself on the bench, he was unconsciously holding it upside down.

As he wanted to get rid of the "Noxious fluid" without being seen throwing it away, he emptied the contents of the bottle into the bell, and treated the

tongue of the bell to a few tastes of Witch Hazel.

While Sandy was thus engaged, Walter said to Joe: "Mr. Miller, the stage leaves in a few minutes, and before that crowd comes out I have something to say to you in a hurry. Our firm wants a man to buy vinegar."

"I'm sorry, Walter, but I don't need any vinegar," replied Joe.

"To buy vinegar for the firm," explained Walter. "Here's a letter from the firm, and there's money in it for you."

"What! Money in the letter for me," exclaimed Joe, as he took the envelope.

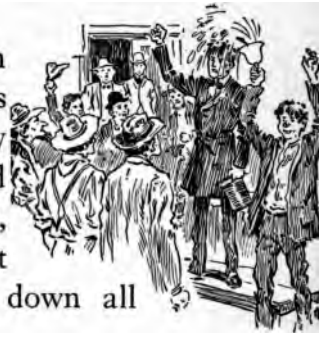
"No joking, Mr. Miller. Money in the job. Try it for a couple of weeks, can't you, and see?"

"Well, I can do most anything once, I suppose," replied Joe, starting to take the letter from the envelope.

Before he had time to do so, the crowd came from the Ready Relief, shouting for him to make a speech, and he put the letter in his pocket.

Walter rescued the rolling chair, and returned to Mrs.

Arlington, leaving Joe to subdue his constituents.



Standing on the wooden bench, with his hat in his hand, he began: "My friends!" Sandy shouted "horray," and rang the bell, and the Witch Hazel went up in the air, and came down all over Joe's bare head.

"What's that," said Joe, "sky juice?"

"Pond's frogstract," said Sandy, and Joe joined in the laugh at his own expense. Then, turning toward Sandy, he said: "Why, Sandy, your bell is ringing wet," and the boys howled with delight at Joe's "get back."

William Henry and Aleck elbowed their way through the crowd, and when Joe began again, young Stripe interrupted him in a loud voice: "Nonsense; this place is a village; villages can't elect Mayors. You are all making fools of yourselves."

"Well, that's our privilege," replied Joe, and went right on: "Fellow fools," and as he said "fellow fools" Sandy put the finishing touch to Joe's confusion, by shouting "Horray!"

"Say," said Joe, pointing his finger at Sandy, "whatever you do, 'horray' in the right place."

William Henry broke in again, saying: "As the legal representative of my father, a tax payer in this village, I protest. I protest such ridiculous proceedings on public property."

As it was plainly evident that he intended the declaration as a challenge to Joe's physical ability, Joe stripped off his coat and stepped down from the bench, saying: "Meeting adjourned five minutes to receive protests."

At this point Walter pushed his way through the crowd, and asked: "Is the speech over?"

"Yes, and we're up to the fire works," replied Joe, as he handed his coat and hat to Bob to hold, but when he turned to face young Stripe, Walter stood between them and added to the excitement by saying: "Henry Stripe, has your father told you about me?" and waved Joe back.

"He has, and about the insults of this man, Miller, too. I'll teach you both a

lesson. I'll settle with this mock Mayor first."

"The stage leaves in five minutes," said Walter, and he was eager for action.

"Let your stage wait," snapped William Henry.

"No, let me wait," said Joe, "I'm in no hurry for mine."

"You licked me once when I was a kid, when you were two heads taller than I was, and you think you can do it again, and belittle me in the eyes of Mildred Arlington, because you are jealous."

"Jealous of you," said William Henry, with contempt. "She doesn't love you."

Something sounded like the crack of a whip, and William Henry had to be lifted up on to the bench, and spread out for repairs. The sample of right-handed athletics, left by Walter over Bill's eye, while not encouraged in "Gyms" of the Y. M. C. A.'s, was voted by the crowd as a handy bit of "manly art" to have on tap in a case of "must."

—o o—

The Vinegar Buyer Gets Some Odd Suggestions About His Instructions.

Having given Walter to understand that he would, at least, give the vinegar buying proposition a trial, Joe sat on the bench by the pump, after the excitement had subsided and the crowd had left, and read the letter which Walter had just handed to him, said to contain instructions for a vinegar buyer. And after he had read it several times, he found himself reading it again to Janie, who was sitting beside him, banging the heels of her new shoes on the foot rail of the bench.

"Indianapolis, Indiana. My dear Mr. Talbut," he began. "You see, Janie, this letter is to Walter, and not to me," and she stretched her neck to see.

"That writin's printed, aint it?" she said.

"That is what they call 'type-writing,' Janie."

"Ripe typein," said Janie, getting her letters mixed. "Gee, golly, it must uv

tuck lots uv time t' tripe write that."

Janie's eyes opened with wonder, when Joe explained to her that 'type-writing' was just like playing on a piano. Then he resumed reading: "He must be a man with good sound business sense; he must possess a sweet disposition; he must be kind and gentle, and be able to judge the true heart of a woman. Respectfully, John Burbage." Then, turning to Janie, he said: "Now, can you beat that? It don't sound right."

"Maybe y' ort t' play it on a pianer," said Janie, in all innocence.

Even though the suggestion didn't throw any light on the subject, it ignited Joe's sense of fun into a flame of laughter that burst forth into a loud roar, and then flickered long after, in occasional low chuckles.

"Well, anyway," he said, "you can see it's going to be no easy job to preserve a sweet disposition on a sour stomach. And, then, what has judging the true heart of a woman got to do with judging vinegar, I'd like to know."

"Cud it be en'thing 'bout th' mother?" replied Janie.

"Mother? Whose mother?" asked Joe.

"Maw sez all good vin'ger has a mother, an' maybe it's th' heart uv th' vin'ger's mother what they mean."

"Janie, you certainly have some ideas," said Joe, with admiration, "but how about this: 'he must be kind and gentle.'"

"I dun'o," she said, "lest it's t' be kine an' good t' some little vin'ger what haint got no mother," and Joe laughed again.

"Well, then, what about this," he said, "'he must possess a sweet disposition.' Maybe you can tell me what a sweet disposition has to do with sour stuff like vinegar."

"Nope, lest it's like what maw sez 'bout folks; nat some folks acts sour, an' some folks acts sweet, jest 'cordin t' what they git t' eat."

"That is digestion, Janie, and not disposition. Digestion is in the stomach; disposition is in—in—the—the—mind," replied Joe, a little mystified just how to explain it.

"Them's it!" exclaimed Janie, "them's

it! Disgust-shun an' dispep-shun; maw sez they's both alike when they's th' same."

She was so earnest with it all, that Joe restrained his laughter, and said: "Well, well, so that's how it is, is it?"

The following day found Joe tramping his way over the country roads, carrying a valise filled with bottles, and tasting and collecting samples of vinegar to give to Walter on his return, to be submitted to his firm.

Mildred's Uncle Fails to Patch up a Truce Between Her Rivals.

Although Mildred had expressed no desire to possess a picture of William Henry, he had told himself to give her one, and had previously arranged to have some photographs taken on the very day following his mixup with Walter.

When he returned to Indianapolis the next morning, he sent the photographer a note, postponing the sitting.

The last words of the note were: "I will explain."

When he met the photographer, the photographer said: "It does."

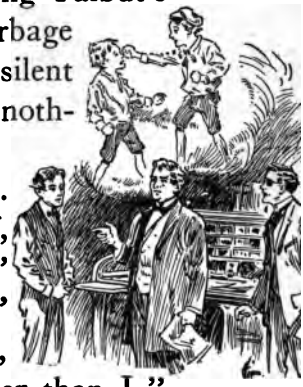
His legal business was temporarily interrupted to give a few leaches a chance to reduce the inflation surrounding his left optic, after which he wore a green patch over it, which some of his pals jokingly referred to as a "lamp shade," and asked him who "lit" on his "lamp," and how long before it would be "relighted."

William Henry's appointment with Mr. John Burbage, Mrs. Arlington's brother, to report progress in the transfer of her husband's estate, could not be postponed.

The afternoon of that day he called at the office of the John Burbage Co., and found Mr. Burbage in a rage over a letter he had just received from his niece, giving the details of the fistic affair at the Corners.

Walter had been called to the private office to explain, and was about to do so, when William Henry was ushered in, wearing convincing evidence that he was the one who should be heard first.

When he explained that he received the blow while resenting young Talbut's insult to his father, Mr. Burbage turned to Walter, who was silent and sullen: "Well, have you nothing to say?" he asked.



"He hit me first," he replied.

Seeing no external proof, Mr. Burbage asked "Where?"

"In th' face, behind th' school-house, eight years ago, when he was two heads taller than I," and the stinging truth made Bill wince.

Walter's reply almost upset Mr. Burbage's gravity, for a smile coaxed at the corners of his mouth for his lips to open and release the laughter that was bubbling within.

"My niece says that in this brawl her name was mentioned," said Mr. Burbage, pointing to the letter which he held in his hand.

After several seconds of silence, during which he impatiently looked from one to the other for an answer, he said, sharply: "Well?"

"It was," admitted young Stripe, but implying by look that Walter was the one to blame.

"I hit him because he called Miss Mildred a liar," replied Walter, and his voice was strong, his fist clenched, and his eyes were in a ferment of fury.

"Called Mildred a liar!" exclaimed Mr. Burbage, in breathless astonishment.

Young Stripe's answer was a low, derisive laugh, but it did not suffice to impress Mr. Burbage in his favor, and he demanded an explanation.

"According to the ethics of my profession, Mr. Burbage, it is Mr. Talbut's duty to you to explain. Mr. Talbut makes the charge. He is the plaintiff; I, the defendant. I deny, therefore, the plaintiff must prove," and he rested back in his chair, well satisfied with his point.

Mr. Burbage looked to Walter for an answer, and, after waiting a reasonable time, he said: "Talbut, I wish to speak with Mr. Stripe alone."

After Walter had gone, Mr. Burbage said: "I wish you to give to him, through me, a written apology, of some kind, for this disgraceful proceeding. Write," and Mr. Burbage motioned young Stripe to sit at his desk.

"Am I to give him an apology without receiving one in return?"

"That will be my business," said Mr. Burbage.

William Henry reluctantly wrote an apology, and, at Mr. Burbage's request, placed it in an unaddressed envelope, and sealed it.

Mr. Burbage placed the envelope in his pocket, saying to William Henry: "I will send for you in a few moments."

When Walter came in, Mr. Burbage said: "Talbut, hand me a written apology to Mr. Stripe, for your disgraceful conduct. Write," and Mr. Burbage pointed to his desk.

"I am sorry to dispute with you, Mr. Burbage, and I am sorry to have to disobey my employer, but I am not sorry for anything I have done to Henry Stripe."

"That is all, for the present," said Mr. Burbage, and Walter left the office.

When William Henry returned, Mr. Burbage handed him the same unaddressed envelope, which he had received from him a few moments before.

"It must be a short apology," remarked young Stripe. "It didn't take him long to write it." Then, before opening it, he continued: "One who openly boasts of a young lady's love, ought to apologize. When he accused me of being jealous, I told him that Mildred, excuse me, that Miss Arlington did not love him, that was all; and he struck me."

Mr. Burbage was thoughtful, and said, slowly: "I see, now, what Talbut means."

"I will leave it to you, Mr. Burbage; was that right?"

"All depends on whether Mildred has told him that she loves him; my niece would not lie," said Mr. Burbage.

The answer wasn't what young Stripe had expected, but he acknowledged the logic of Mr. Burbage's reasoning—"if Mildred has told him that she loves him."

Then, with lawyer-like craftiness, he said: "But, this apology, sir, is proof she has not told him so, or he would not apologize," and, hastily tearing open the envelope, he took out the note, intending to read it to Mr. Burbage.

William Henry's embarrassment was responsible for the silence that followed.

"For the present, the matter is postponed, until further notice," said Mr. Burbage, and after William Henry had gone, he called his stenographer and dictated a letter to young Talbut; and also one to his sister, Mrs. Arlington.

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A Loaf of Lies
Is Given in Exchange for
A Crumb of Favor.

As William Henry was not included in Mildred's letter list, it was necessary for him to get back to the Sanitarium at Boscomb's Corners as quickly as possible, to renew his matrimonial designs on Mrs. Arlington's estate.

As soon as he was able to have the "lamp shade" lifted, he took his token of Walter's regard for him to an expert eye decorator, and had the discoloration blended in with the rest of his skin.

In the rose arbor, in front of the Sanitarium, young Stripe found his first chance to speak to Mildred confidentially.

Her frigid reception drove him at once to misstatements and downright falsehoods, to defend his conduct.

"A street fight, before a crowd of village loungers, is disgraceful, Mr. Stripe," was Mildred's chilling blast to his "hope" that she was not angry.

"Quite so, Miss Mildred; and beneath the dignity of a person in my position. But, I was provoked to strike, and the blows I struck were for you."

"And, I suppose, I should be grateful to my champion," she said, tempered with a touch of relentment.

"Your mother has accepted my explanation and apology, and I have explained to your uncle. I understand that he has written this young Talbut imperative orders to apologize to you, and to your mother, and also to me."

"Walter Talbut certainly had no right to make our friendship the subject for a street brawl," said Mildred, in a tone mixed with pique and regret.

"No, indeed, Miss Mildred; for our friendship is—"

"I referred to Walter's friendship, Mr. Stripe," was Mildred's icy interruption to William Henry's misplaced ardor.

"He accused me of being jealous of him, and we came to blows."

"And I dare say that he deserved all that he got," and William Henry turned his face away, to hide the frescoed fact that Walter had probably hurt his hand.

"Was he badly injured?" she asked, without betraying any sympathy.

"They say that his left eye was cut, and that his nose was broken," he replied, willing to exchange a loaf of lies for a crumb of favor.

"Oh, I hope not," she exclaimed, with sincere regret, and William Henry drew in the horns of his conceit.

"A moment ago you said that he probably deserved all that he got."

"But I did not know he got so much," she said, with pretended surprise, which was not convincing to William Henry.

"Then, you do love Walter Talbut?"

She fought hard to deceive him, by saying in a careless way: "Why, I sympathize with him."

In desperation he pointed to his painted eye, and whined like a peevish pup: "And have you no sympathy for me?"

Instantly she was on her toes with delight, exclaiming: "Oh! and did Walter give you a black eye?" Then, checking her burst of truthfulness, she sat down again, saying: "I'm so sorry."

From the flat way that William Henry said "Thank you," it was evident that he felt himself wedged into a corner of unpopularity.

"This unpleasant occurrence has interrupted our better acquaintance, Miss Mildred, but some day I trust that you will appreciate my interest in your welfare."

"I do appreciate your friendly interest, Mr. Stripe," said Mildred, pleasantly, to conciliate his disappointment.

"My interest is more than that of a friend," he said, as he placed his hand on the back of the rustic seat, and leaned over her, as though to continue the conversation in a lower tone.

The rose vines rustled, and parted, and a familiar face peeped through, begged Miss Mildred's pardon, and withdrew.

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The Rum Seller
Gets a Hot Shot from Mildred and William Henry Wilts.

To the person who stood begging her pardon for peering into the rose arbor, Mildred said: "Good afternoon; how well you are looking."

He was about to go away, when she called to him to please wait, and, coming out, she met Sandy, dressed up in a new checkered "jumper" and blue overalls, with a sprinkling can in one hand and garden tools in the other.

"I deserve t' be joked at about looking well, Miss Mildred, jest fer peeking in," he said, hanging his head.

Mildred laughed heartily to find that she had been so unwittingly witty.

"I'm going to thank you every time I see y' fer gettin' me this job. If it had'n bin fer you an' Joe Miller, I guess I'd still be ketchen frogs fer licker."

"You look as though the work agreed with you," she said.

"It must, fer I aint drinkin' a drop."

"Your improved appearance tells me that, Sandy — excuse me — Mr. Talbut."

"From you, Miss, please, jest 'Sandy.'"

"Very well, then," and in her sweetest tone Mildred repeated, "Sandy."

"That's it. God bless y', little lady, little lady. I only hope my Janie ken some day be like—like—" and he turned away, for he was ashamed of his voice for faltering so, and ashamed of his eyes for getting so dripping wet on a dry day. Then he looked up into the sky as though he heard someone there say: "You need not be ashamed to look this way."

"Don't be discouraged," said Mildred, encouragingly. "Be brave, be brave."

While Sandy was struggling with his emotion, William Henry was figuring out some remark to contribute to the conversation that would reflect on Walter.

"What is there worse," he asked, "than a man who drinks rum to excess?"

"The man who sells it to him," said Mildred, promptly, with an implied meaning that doubled William Henry up with mental cramps of dejection.

Mildred turned her back on young Stripe and disappeared into the Sanitarium, leaving Sandy to enjoy the whipped cream pallor on his face.

"That's a boeket uv smart-weed fer your dad, Bill. It's too bad he aint here t' make a bow," and, while Sandy was still speaking, Aleck came waddling around the corner of the house, puffing and grunting, carrying a pair of dumb-bells. "Hello, Aleck! Yer jest in time t' make a bow, if y' aint too fat; bowin' is fine exercise fer fat folks."

"Mine jer bizniss. I'm reducin all right. I'm follerin' th' doctor's orders, an' goin' without m' meals."

"How'd y' like a mess uv frogs," asked Sandy.

"How'd y' like a drink," retorted Aleck.

"Nope, I've tuck th' pledge agin," and Sandy straightened up with pride. "An' this time I'm goin' t' make Miss Mildred Arlington proud uv my boy's dad."

"Mildred Arlington!" said Aleck. "Huh! Well, 'twon't do y' no good; fer my boy, William Henry Harrison, has got his eye on her."

Aleck put such stress on the word "eye," that it prompted Sandy to rattle William Henry's "skeleton," by asking: "How is yer eye, Bill?"

It was such an irritating question that Bill snapped back: "Don't worry; it's coming out all right."

"Is it comin' out, Bill?" asked Aleck, excitedly.

"No, getting along, I mean," he replied, in distemper, with an added sneer of disgust. "But these are not the blows that count in this game. It's th' heart blow that wins," and all the hidden meanness in his system scummed his wicked eyes, as he said to Sandy: "And I'm going to break young Talbut's heart."

"Well, don't fergit they's many a slop with every slip," and Sandy turned his attention to the flower beds, while the Stripes engaged in a confidential talk over Bill's prospects.

"How's th' gal takin' to y', Bill?"

"Oh, all right; but I haven't commenced to plead my case yet. I want to give her a chance to turn against young Talbut first."

"An' what's goin' t' make 'er, Bill?"

"His stubbornness and quick temper," he replied.

"An' 'is drunken dad, tew," said Aleck. "Sez 'e's swore off drinkin', but I'll git 'im a goin' agin."

As they passed Sandy, he was kneeling down, and digging in one of the flower beds. He looked up, and said: "Say, Aleck, it's wuth workin' here fer nuthen, jest t' see you pay yer board, an' nen have t' go without yer meals."

"Zat so," said Aleck. "Well, y' best not let yer widder see y' workin'; she might drap down dead."

"Well, if she does, I'll know I helped 'er t' die happy, an' nat's mor'n y' helped yure wife t' do," and Sandy accidentally let his foot slip back on purpose, and William Henry helped his father up.

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The Sudden Shock of Seeing Sandy at Work Almost Wrecks Miranda's Reason.

An hour or so after Sandy had been warned by Aleck of the possible consequence of Sandy's widow seeing him at work, Miranda visited the Sanitarium with a basket of new potatoes from her own garden, to exchange for a little "pin money."

She walked to within a few feet of where Sandy was working before recognizing him in his new "jumper" and overalls; then she gasped, staggered backwards a step or two, pressed her hand to her forehead, and stood staring, in doubt of her senses.

"I aint a delusion, Mirandy; I'm me," and Miranda's fear was fun for Sandy, as he laughed, and hit his chest to assure her that he was not a "dissolving view."

"Well, gra*shuss*, good*ness-ness!* It's wuth th' price uv a cir*cuss* t' see you work; it's a ex*hi*bition I never *ex*pected t' wit*ness*."

"I'm a surprise party t' m'self," said Sandy, coming down the ladder.

Janie started out with her mother, but she had stopped along the way to gather up some buttercups leaning in over the path, inviting her to take them to the sick folks at the Sanitarium, satisfied to wither and die in the appreciation of anyone who would call them "pretty" and "sweet," even for a few short hours.

Her mother called to her to hurry.

"Come here, child," she said, "and *be*hold yer *ex*father *ex*ert *him*self."

"Why, pop aint doin' nothin' wrong is he," asked Janie, as Sandy stood with his cap in his hand, smiling proudly.

"Well, af*ter* keep*in* boar*ders* fer ten years t' *sup*port 'im, he or*tent* t' start work*ing*, *with*out first war*ning* me; I ull*most* got th' *hi*ster*ics*!"

"Nen y' best quit workin', dad, if it's goin' ter make maw sick," said Janie.

"Oh, I ken stan *it* if *he* ken," said Miranda. "What's yer wa*giz*."

"Two dollars every week, an' found."

"Found?" she repeated, "found where;

out in th' woods, with a whis*kee* bot*tell*? If you *git* hold of that two dol*lars* they ne*ver* will find *you*."

"Pop's quit a drinkin', maw, an' 'es doin' good," said Janie.

"Well, th' doc*ters* alluz did say twuz *in*vigera*ting* t' dig in th' el*ee*ments."

"How'd y' like m' new shirt waist Mirandy," and Sandy stepped nearer to her, and whirled around, to show off his new "jumper."

"Now, don't familiar*ize*; *re*mem*bur*, we are sepa*rated*."

"Well, they can't no harm come uv m' jest talken to y', ken they?" asked Sandy.

"They might," and she gave him her reason, without his asking—"when yer so*bur* you *all*uz wuz a pur*sway*sive *brute*."

"I wanted t' ask if I cud come down t' th' house Sunday, an' visit Janie a little while."

"*A*bout din*ner* time, *I* spose, an' sponge *a* meal?"

"No; I'll fetch m' own grub."

"Let 'im, maw," pleaded Janie, "let 'im."

"Why, chile, what ud th' neigh*burs* say t' me hav*ing* him hang*ing* *a*round, when we are *dee*vorsed."

"I ken sneak in th' back way 'thout slamin' th' gate," said Sandy.

"Huh, that's yer old *trick*," and Mrs. Talbut started away toward the kitchen.

"Ah, let 'im come, maw," pleaded Janie, again; and her mother stopped, and eyed Sandy, suspiciously.

"Well, *come* in t' th' *front* door, then; *no* good comes of snea*king;* an' I'll go t' th' neigh*burs 'till* yer gone; but, *re*mem*bur and* bring yer own *grub*," and she continued her errand with the potatoes.

"Now, y' see, dad, maw don't hate y' when yer sober."

"Yes, but she's askeered t' talk t' me, less I'm full. I guess I'll have t' write her a letter."

"I would'n," said Janie, "cause it takes letters too long t' git t' folks. Maw was readin' a letter from you lass night y' wrote twelve years ago, an' she cried."

Sandy stood silent for a moment, and then said: "Yer hand feels like yer maw's uster, unly littler," and they walked over to the flower beds, and he showed Janie the little human faces on the pansies.

Cub Stubborness Knows no Compromise and Walter and Mildred Part.

On a rustic bench, just out of hearing of the voices of the patients on the veranda, Mrs. Arlington spent much of her time, listening to Mildred's reading of short stories.

Mildred had just finished one, and was trying to interest her mother by describing Janie and Sandy at the pansy bed, when Mrs. Arlington asked: "Is not this the day Mr. Miller is to return?"

"Why, mother, dear, that is the second time you have asked that same question in the last half hour."

"Is it, dear? Well, I had forgotten," and Mildred gave an insinuating little laugh, which her mother enjoyed even though it did start the color to her cheeks.

"He said, when he went away, that he had some long trips to make across some hilly country," replied Mildred.

"Across some hilly country," repeated Mrs. Arlington, ranging her eyes a little

higher. "How beautiful the hills always looked to me before I—I—"

"Yes, yes, mother, dear; and I pray God every night of my life to please let you see them soon again," and Mildred took her mother's hand in hers, and patted it gently.

"My only one; my only one," said the mother, softly, and for a few moments, in silence, each strengthened the other in the happiness they found in Hope.

Neither of them were aware of Walter's presence, until he greeted them, saying: "Mrs. Arlington—Mildred."

"It is Walter, mother," said Mildred.

"Yes my child, I know," and the calmness in her voice impressed Mildred that there was something to be adjusted before they could greet him cordially. "Has he come to apologize to us, and to Mr. Stripe for his conduct?" she asked.

"When a person is in the wrong, Mrs. Arlington, it is manly to say so; and when they are in the right, it is manly to—to—stick to it."

"Then you think that what you did was right?" she asked.

"Yes, Mrs. Arlington, otherwise I should not have done it."

"Come, Mildred," and Mrs. Arlington arose, "we must be governed by the advice in your uncle's letter," and she held out her hand to be guided along the path.

"I can explain," pleaded Walter, with eagerness to discuss the matter.

"Explanations have already been made, only apologies are now in order," she replied.

"Yes, explanations by Henry Stripe," and Walter's tone indicated his lack of confidence in William Henry's veracity.

"I have no reason to doubt his word; he is my attorney. Come Mildred."

After Mildred had seated her mother in the parlor, she said: "Let me return to Walter, mother, and try to persuade him."

"As you please, my dear, but remember the advice in your uncle's letter, and be firm."

"Now, young man, I want you to listen to me," and to add

more force to her command, she folded her arms and stamped her foot, as she faced Walter; then, suddenly remembering what William Henry had said about Walter's nose, she exclaimed: "Why, Walter! Your nose isn't broken."

"Well, I know it isn't; who said it was?"

"Mr. Stripe," replied Mildred.

"Yes? Well, how could he tell, he only had one eye left to see out of when I got through with him."

"I am ashamed of you, Walter, for mentioning our love affairs, and fighting about me in the open street."

"The place cuts no figure with me. The girl I love I'll fight for anywhere," and her arms uncrossed and hung limp by her side, and she couldn't have stamped her foot just then if she had tried. "You said you loved me, didn't you," he asked.

"I do—I mean I did—I mean I said I did—Oh, dear; I was trying to say that I said what I did say without saying what I just said," and Mildred sat down in confusion on the rustic bench, and looked up at Walter as meek as a lamb.

"Well, you said that you did, and when he said that you didn't, I hit him, because he called you a liar."

"Called me a—why Walter, I—" exclaimed Mildred, getting up from the bench and also getting excited.

"When I accused him of being jealous of me, he said 'she doesn't love you.' Now, you see my point, and I am here by your uncle's command, to apologize to all concerned, including this Bill Stripe."

"But you will just say that you are sorry, won't you?" was Mildred's weak attempt to influence Walter to retract his resentment of William Henry's aspersion on her honesty.

"Not in a thousand years," was Walter's determined reply.

"It's the easiest way, Walter," was the only argument she could offer.

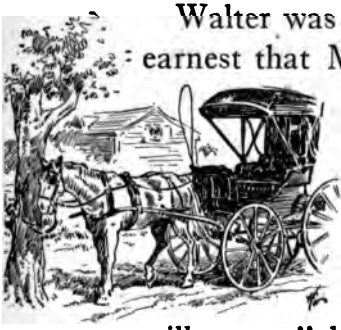
"The right way is the way I want, or go my way," he said.

"And give me up?" asked Mildred, in a last hope to break his stubbornness.

"No; take you with me," and he stepped close to her, and said, hastily and in an undertone: "I knew this argument was coming, so I drove over from the station

in a carriage. I left the carriage at the foot of the hill. Now, I want you to drive with me to the house of Parson Deering, then I'll bring you back, and let your uncle do his worst."

Walter was so honest and so earnest that Mildred trembled with emotion.



"Why, Walter, think what it means, without my mother's knowledge, and against uncle's wishes."

"I have thought what it will mean," he replied, "if you do not. It will mean that your love is not equal to mine."

"Oh, Walter, do you think that? Do you think—" and the trembling excitement was stilled from the shock of the first blow of this kind she had ever felt.

"Not—not yet," he was merciful enough to say.

"But you will, unless I—I—," her voice failed her and the tears came up to tell him that her heart was badly hurt.

He wavered for a moment.

"Walter, this is our first quarrel,"

she said, with a note of disappointment and sadness in her voice.

His bull-dog disposition beat down his impulse to relent and be patient, and he answered sullenly: "The carriage is at the foot of the hill."

The color was returning to her lips, for her heart was beating fast, to give them strength to answer back.

"You ask too much," she said, and the unexpected flicker of resistance halted Walter's stampede of stubbornness, and reasoning replaced demand.

"There is no dishonor in what I ask, there is no deceit in me," he said.

Her heart took courage and rushed the warm blood into her cheeks and dried the tears in her eyes.

"No, Walter, I cannot," she replied, with a calmness in her voice, and a calmness in her eyes, that told him she had conquered her emotions and had decided to conquer him.

Cub-stubbornness knows no compromise. Like the sapling which cannot bend before the wind, it must break, and never live to use the strength it would have gained by bending.

"Perhaps, then, the sooner I end this dream of mine, the better," he said.

"Dream? Why, Walter, do you think I have been deceiving you?"

"There are times when actions speak louder than words," he said. "The carriage is at the foot of the hill."

"Walter, my mother is blind. Shall I say 'good-bye' to her, or to you?"

He made no reply.

"You do not answer; then I will answer for you—Good-bye," and she held her hand toward him, purposely touching his arm, in hope of receiving, at least, a friendly farewell.

"Good-bye, Miss Arlington," and he shook her hand, and turned away.

With "an eye for an eye," she did the same, and each stood with their back toward the other.

"Will you be coming to the city soon?" he asked.

"I do not know," she replied.

"I hope so," he said.

After a long silence, Mildred said: "You hope so? And why do you say 'you hope so?'"

She had not heard him walk away, and

when she looked around, intending to repeat her question, Walter was some distance from her.

Her first impulse was to call to him, but, on second thought, she stamped her foot, in anger.

"I'll tell 'im y' want 'im, Miss Milerd," said a child's voice at her side, and Janie started to run after her brother.

"No, no," said Mildred, "unless he turns and looks toward me, I do not want to call him back; neither will I stir a step toward him. See, he does not turn back," and she clutched the sleeve of Janie's dress, and said: "If he can forget, so can I forget."

"Be y' both a goin' t' ferget sumpen?" asked Janie.

Mildred's face was covered by her hands, and she did not answer.

"Can't y' think uv what twuz y' wuz t' fergit?" and when Janie saw that Mildred was crying, she said: "Walter's alus tellin' maw t' 'fergit it' 'bout sumpen er nuther, but maw jes laffs," and Janie reached up, and took hold of Mildred's hands, and tried to console her.

—oo—

Vinegar Beats "Fire-Water" on Beans, and Sandy Sticks to Vinegar.

At the time when Mildred's face was buried in her hands, Joe Miller, travel worn and dusty, from tramping over the hill roads, was crossing the lawn toward the Sanitarium.

He was carrying a large bunch of wild flowers, and also a black valise, filled with bottles of vinegar.

"Hello, Mildred! Playing peek-a-boo?" he called to her.

Mildred awoke so suddenly from her trance of troubles, that she was bewildered and frightened, and ran toward the house snapping at Joe as she passed: "Don't speak to me."

He looked after her, dumb-founded; then, slowly turning to Janie, he said thoughtfully: "I'll bet I've drank so much vinegar that I've soured my face. For the last week I've done nothing but irrigate my insides with sour apple juice; and today I started in coughing up mother."

"Did y'?" said Janie. "Y' must uv bin orful hungry t' eat th' vinegar's mother."

"I was, and I'm hungry enough now to eat the rest of the vinegar family," replied Joe, as he seated himself on the rustic bench. "What's the news?"

"Here's maw, she ken tell y'," and Mrs. Talbut, who was coming from the kitchen way toward Janie, spied Joe, and exclaimed: "Well, Joe Mill*er*, I haint seen *you* round the Sanitari*um* fer a *week* back."

"For a week back," repeated Joe, laughing. "Say, widder, are you making jokes too? What's the news at the Corners."

"Well, old man Stripe *has* closed his *gin mill*, an' th' bar*bur* shop is *opened* upa *gen*."

"Good; now Sandy can trade off a mess of frogs for a hair cut," said Joe.

"Haint you *seen* 'im yet?" asked the widow. "He's slicked up like a prize year*lin*, an' ten*den* the gar*den* here at the Santiari*um*."

"That's good," replied Joe. "Are there many patients at the Sanitarium now?"

"Every floor filled with rhoom*atics*."

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"Excepting the top floor; that's filled with attic rooms, isn't it?" asked Joe.

The widow's laughter was cut short by her catching sight of Sandy and saying: "There's San*dee* agin, ruma*gin* around with that sprink*lin* pot," and she grabbed Janie by the hand, and started to go.

"Why don't y' wait and give him a little encouragement," said Joe.

" 'Scuse *me;* I aint a goin' t' *com*promise *my*self by compli*mentin'* him," and she fled through the nearest open door to the Sanitarium.

Sandy came swaggering toward Joe with pride, saying: "Hello, Mayor."

Joe shook Sandy by the hand, and admired him from head to foot.

"Well, I'm glad to see you on the water route at last," he said. "How do you like rushing the rain can?"

"Is that my job, Joe?" asked Sandy.

"I guess 'tis," replied Joe, "lawn janitor, rusher of the rain can, and chamber maid of the flower beds. What is your favorite flower, Sandy?"

"Buckwheat," and Sandy grinned with pride over his prompt answer.

"That's all right, Sandy. I didn't think

you remembered that one. And, don't forget, you raise it with a yeast cake. How is your appetite here, improving?"

"Yes, I eat like a horse," replied Sandy.

"Where do they feed you, out in the barn?" asked Joe.

"I keep filled up on baked beans and biled cabbage. But, Joe, I'm jest dyin' fer a drink. I aint had one in six days, an' my stomach's in a awful pickle."

"Well, your stomach isn't in any worse pickle than mine is; but, if you're going to die for the want of a drink, I'll save your life; here," and Joe took a bottle from his valise and handed it to Sandy.

"Aint you goin' t' have one?" asked Sandy, as he uncorked the bottle.

"One?" said Joe. "I have fifty-seven different varieties inside of me now."

Sandy swallowed a good swig, and the smile on his face turned a somersalt as he exclaimed, "Vinegar!"

"Yes, vinegar for your beans," said Joe, laughing; "Go ahead and put some on your cabbage, too."

"That's crab-apple," said Sandy, as

he tasted with his tongue some that was left on his lips.

"Try this one; maybe it's better," and Joe handed him another bottle.

"Cullins," said Sandy, tasting just enough to get a decision on, "and no mother," he added, holding the bottle up and looking through it.

"Then I'll mark it orphan vinegar," said Joe. "That's the one I swallowed the mother to, I guess. Here's a bottle looks as though the old lady was at home," and Joe handed him another.

"Cider apples; best yit," and Sandy smacked his lips, and took half the bottle before Joe could stop him.

"Now, will you have vinegar on your beans?" said Joe, laughing. "Say, Sandy, you know more about vinegar than I do. Take these bottles home with you to-night and test them for me, will you? Then, in the morning, tell me which bottle sets the best on your stomach."

"How am I a goin' t' find that out?" asked Sandy, as he distributed the bottles in the pockets of his "jumper" and overalls.

"Any way you like. Lie on your back and stand th' bottles all up on y', if y' want to, and which ever one sets the best, I'll buy the most of."

"That means I've got t' stay awake, lie on m' back, an' watch these bottles all night. I'm liable t' git th' blind staggers," but Joe made no reply as he walked toward the Sanitarium, and left Sandy gathering his garden tools.

While Joe was handing the bouquette of wild flowers to one of the servants, to be taken to Mrs. Arlington, Aleck Stripe sneaked from around the corner of the house, and up to Sandy, saying, "Here, Sandy, slip this in yer pocket. I fetched it over from th' Corners fer y'," and he offered Sandy a pint flask of whiskey.

The few swallows of hard cider or "soft vinegar," which Sandy had just had served to satisfy his craving for liquor for the moment, and he answered: "Too late; I've got a bottle in every pocket."

"Bottle of what," asked Aleck.

"Vinegar! I'm a testin' it fer Joe Miller."

"Jest take a smell uv it, it's fine," and Aleck uncorked the bottle and put it close to Sandy's nose.

He put the sprinkling can down and took the bottle, saying: "It smells fine, don't it."

Aleck rubbed his hands and his small eyes danced like a serpent's, for the bottle was being raised to Sandy's lips.

"Vinegar's best on beans, Sandy," said a low voice behind them, and the hand with the bottle stopped, and then slowly dropped, as Sandy looked around, and said: "All right, Joe; all right;" then he picked up the sprinkling can and went slowly around the corner of the house, to hide his humiliation.

Where the Meadow Brook Flows, Joe Paints Some Word Pictures of Sand-crabs and Toes.

"Say, Aleck," said Joe, "if you looked as small as you feel, right now, there wouldn't be enough of y' for me to see you walking away," and Aleck seemed to shrivel up under the withering look that Joe turned loose on him from his half closed eyes.

"What are you trying to do, run a 'bootleg' bar room here at the Sanitarium, since y' closed up?"

"No, sir; "I'm here to be treated," replied Aleck.

"Then treat yourself, and let Sandy alone," said Joe.

"Don't cher worry, I'm takin' th' proper treatin' all right fer shrinkin' flesh, an' th' doctor says, if I stick to it I'll git rid of it."

"That's good," said Joe. "You are going to stick to it and get rid of it. You must have a good doctor."

"Now, y' needn' t' git comic. My son, William Henry, is keepin' 'is eye peeled fer you."

"Yes, I remember that he had his eye peeled the last time I saw him," and Joe was almost shouting, for Aleck was getting out of hearing as rapidly as he could waddle.

"I thought I recognized your voice, Mr. Miller," said Mrs. Arlington, who had found her way from the parlor to the veranda, alone.

"Yes, Mrs. Arlington. I was just trying it on your attorney's father," and she rested her outstretched hand in his, and he guided her toward the rustic bench.

"Is Mildred here?" she asked.

"No," replied Joe, "not now; but she was here for a second or so, a few moments ago."

"And were you talking with her?"

"Well, not so that anyone noticed it," said Joe. "Mildred rushed by, and told me not to speak to her.

"Oh, my; I'm afraid that my Mildred is foolishly in love."

"Well, she's not in love with me, that's one sure thing," and he gently assisted her to be seated.

"These wild flowers you brought me are lovely," she said, "so fragrant, so beautiful; I see them now through memory's eyes," and she ran her fingers over the blossoms, naming each correctly: "Butter-cups, daisies, wild roses, and a few forget-me-nots."

"That's right, Mrs. Arlington, you had every one of them right," said Joe; "th' reason for so few forget-me-nots is, because forget-me-nots are scarce; but I'll get you some more of those remember-me's tomorrow, if I have to go twice as far to get them. Today, the scene was beautiful across the hills, Mrs. Arlington."

"Yes, yes; tell me of the hills, and of the valleys," she asked, eagerly, "they are always beautiful; they never change; the sloping meadow land, with its carpeting of green—"

"And the sheep eating up the carpet," interrupted Joe, just to inject a touch of humor into the picture; "eating up the carpet, making wool, to pay the carpet tax," and Joe laughed a little himself, over the odd twist he managed to give to the end of his remark.

"What an extravagant idea," she said.

"Yes," replied Joe, "an extravagant idea is an inexpensive luxury for a man with no money, for he is in no danger of burning his fingers trying to make it come true. Today, Mrs. Arlington, I watched th' red squirrels play tag in th' trees, and I watched th' chip-monks race along th' rail fence," and he bent over and pointed straight out in front of her, and he was so earnest with it all, that Mrs. Arlington leaned forward as though she really saw the fence and the chip-monks running along the rails; and she smiled and he was happy. "And from the bridge across the brook, I watched the minnows playing hide and seek in the shadows; then I took off my shoes and stockings—"

"And waded in the brook?" she exclaimed; for she was so interested that she imagined she could see him standing in the stream.

"Yes, and waded in the brook," said Joe, "and let the sand crabs bite my toes."

"Oh, how I wish I had been with you," she said.

For an instant Joe didn't know just exactly how to continue the subject.

"All right, I'll take y' tomorrow, and let the sand crabs bite your—our—my—" and while he hesitated to think whose toes would be etiquette for the crabs to bite, Mrs. Arlington rescued him from his confusion by changing the subject.

"You haven't told me about this new occupation of yours, do you like it?"

"Well, I like this part of it the best, talking to you," he said.

"Talking to me? Why, what has your new occupation to do with your talking to me."

"Well, according to my letter of instructions, I must be kind and gentle—"

"Yes; well, that is no effort for you, I am sure," she said.

"Thank you, Mrs. Arlington. Then I must have a sweet disposition—"

"That you have, naturally," she added.

"I thank you, again Mrs. Arlington; and I am bowing, Mrs. Arlington, I am bowing; feel if I'm not," and he bowed low before her and waited.

"I'll take your word for it," she laughed.

"Then after being kind and

gentle, and sitting up nights with my sweet disposition, I must be able to judge the true heart of a woman. That sounds as though I might be a matrimonial agent, doesn't it?"

"It does, doesn't it?" she replied.

"But, my real job isn't anything as sweet as all that."

"And what is your real job, as you call it?" she asked.

"I'm ashamed to tell y'. That's why I made Walter and Miss Mildred promise not to tell. I didn't even give the firm my right name. I'm souring on my job now; I think I'm a failure at it."

"Then you are not able to judge the true heart of a woman?" she asked.

"Oh, I don't know, I guess I'm a heart failure, too," and he sat timidly on the rustic bench, as far from her as he could without falling off.

"How few men there are in this world who can judge and appreciate the true heart of a woman," she said.

"Well, y' know, true hearts are scarce," replied Joe, "and maybe the men don't get practice enough to keep in

trim on true hearts;" then, slowly and in a tone of deep respect, he said: "But Mildred's father was a man who could appreciate the true heart of a woman."

"Thank you, Mr. Miller, thank you."

After a moment of thoughtful silence, during which he was rubbing the nap on his hat the wrong way, he said: "I have often wished that I was Mildred's father."

"Why, Mr. Miller, what are you saying?" said Mrs. Arlington with surprise, "Mildred's father is dead."

It was as well for Joe that Mrs. Arlington could not see him, as he almost capsized from the end of the bench.

"Yes, yes, I know," replied Joe, and he fidgited about, trying to think out how to get out of the awkward position in which his remark had placed him. "What I meant was, that, for all the happiness of his life while he lived, and for the place he holds in your memory now, that I'd be satisfied to be dead," and he was satisfied that he had said something, but he wasn't just sure what.

"Why, Mr. Miller, I never heard you talk like this before," she said.

"No, nor anyone else has ever heard me either," he replied. "I never heard myself talk like it before." Then, to shift the conversation without changing the subject, he said: "Let me wheel you over for a glass of soda water, we have just time before supper."

"But, won't it spoil your supper," she asked.

"Not if it's like one they gave me here last week; I couldn't dissolve it with acid," and he hurried away to get the rolling chair.

—o o—

A Bitter Pill
Is Given to Attorney Stripe for "Willie and the Will."

As William Henry had predicted, Walter's stubbornness was his undoing.

Mildred, in her blind haste to retaliate, was so agreeable to William Henry that he felt safe in making advances rapidly, and received her permission to "speak to her mother."

Mrs. Arlington, sitting alone on the bench where Joe had just left her, was an inviting opportunity for him to say something before Mildred's mood could change.

"Here is Mr. Stripe, mother," said Mildred, as they came near to her.

"With more papers for me to sign?"

"Not yet, Mrs. Arlington," he replied, "I am getting them ready as rapidly as possible. Mrs. Arlington, I have just promised Mildred that I would speak with you at the first possible opportunity regarding my sincere interest in her welfare. Mildred insists that I plead my case in a higher court than hers."

"Your case? What case? Mr. Stripe; I do not understand you."

"Your attorney, Mrs. Arlington, has fallen in love with his client's beautiful daughter."

"Why, Mr. Stripe," and Mrs. Arlington reached out her hand for Mildred.

"And your daughter, Mrs. Arlington, has given your attorney permission to plead his case with his client."

"Why, my only one," and Mrs. Arlington drew Mildred close to her.

"That's my case, Mrs. Arlington, and I plead for a chance to devote my life to your daughter's happiness."

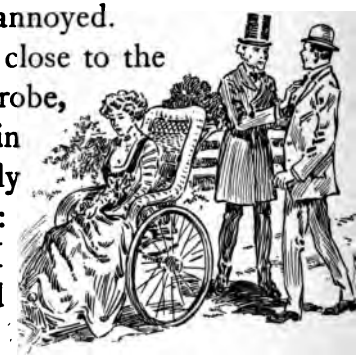
"For my Mildred? Why, Mr. Stripe, I had not expected my child to consider such a question for a long time yet."

"You are to consider for me, mother; and to answer," said Mildred.

"No mother's heart can answer for her child's, my only one; but there is plenty of time, plenty of time. You must think for yourself, and think well. Will you place these flowers in my room, dear; Mr. Miller brought them."

Mildred took the flowers and started toward the house, as Joe startled all of them by calling out: "All aboard for Sodaville, Mrs. Arlington," and while he was pushing the rolling chair near to the bench, he said to Mildred: "Is the storm over?"

When she nodded her head, Joe looked at William Henry, and then turned to her and said: "I'm afraid it's just commencing," and, instead of smiling, Mildred looked just a little annoyed.



William Henry stepped close to the chair, to tuck in the lap-robe, but Joe, stepping quickly in between, gently, but firmly crowded him back, saying: "That'll be all right; I think your shoe is untied again."

"Mr. Stripe is always having trouble tying his shoe," said Mrs. Arlington.

"Yes, he ought to go barefooted," said Joe, as he finished tucking in the robe.

"I'm not forgetting you," said William Henry, in a low tone.

"All right," said Joe, "then tie for me a sweet forget-me-not."

William Henry walked toward the house but, when he heard Mrs. Arlington say: "Mr. Miller, something has just occurred concerning Mildred," he returned and listened, unnoticed by Joe.

"You mean that lawyer has proposed for your daughter's hand," said Joe.

"You are a good guesser, Mr. Miller," replied the widow.

"No, I'm a good listener, Mrs. Arlington. I was waiting there with the chair and overheard a part of what he said."

"And what if you did?" asked William Henry.

"Oh, Mr. Stripe, I thought you had gone," said Mrs. Arlington. "When will those papers be ready, did you say?"

"Soon, now, very soon, Mrs. Arlington; I am delayed with the copying."

Not wishing to annoy Mrs. Arlington with his private opinion of William Henry, Joe stepped close to him and said: "Say, Willie; Willie and the will, what are you up to anyway; trying to be the oldest male member of the family, before the transfer is signed, aye? And get control of all the money?"

"You mind your business; I'll attend

to the will," replied William Henry.

"Yes, Willie and the will, but, will 'e?" said Joe.

"What are you saying, Mr. Miller?" asked Mrs. Arlington.

"Oh, nothing, nothing, Mrs. Arlington, I was just letting William Henry hear me telling myself one of his secrets," and Joe started away with the chair, leaving young Stripe scared half out of his wits.

—o o—

Walter is Arrested,
And Mildred Chooses Henry Stripe,
Just for Spite.

William Henry paced up and down the lawn in a quandary, for Joe's cunning had put an awful kink in his courage and the bold guess at the young attorney's motive for proposing to Mildred put his mind in a ferment of indecision.

While he was ransacking his brain for something with which to contradict Joe's suspicion, Aleck came lumbering toward him, all out of breath, about as fast and as graceful as a horse backing up a hill.

"Say, Bill," he said, "I've got a joke on young Talbut that beats Joe Miller's jokes all holler."

"What is it, dad?" he asked eagerly.

"Y' know Joe Miller told Bob Boscomb that he cud be th' chief uv th' perlice?"

"Yes; well, what of it?"

"Well, Bob thinks he is, an' I got 'im t' go an arrest young Talbut fer lickin' you, an' t' fetch 'im here t' th' San'tarium."

"What for?" asked William Henry.

" 'Cause Joe Miller is here, an' Bob sez he's got t' bring all prisoners afore th' Mayor."

"But, it is all a ridiculous proceeding," said William Henry.

"What uv it, s'long zit makes a fool uv young Talbut afore Mrs. Arlin'ton an' 'er dorter? An' th' best part uv th' hull joke, Bill, is, that young Talbut is walkin' right along like a lamb," and Aleck shook with laughter.

"Of course; because it's a good chance for him to get back here to the Sanitarium to see Mildred again. But, it will do him no good, Mildred is done with—"

"Bob's comin' with 'im now; look serious, Bill," and Aleck threw back his shoulders and tried to look important.

It wasn't necessary for Aleck to have warned William Henry to look serious, for he couldn't help but look serious; in fact, he was looking so very serious, that, when Aleck turned toward him, he said: "Bill, don't make faces at 'im, you'll spile th' fun uv th' thing."

Although Aleck had seen Bob before,

and had laughed at his policeman's outfit, he almost burst out again as he took another look at the blue army coat, with one gold braided epaulette, belted at the waist with a trunk strap; the nickel plated badge that read "Licensed Hack;" a thick hickory stick that had been rounded into a home-made club, with the assistance of a draw-shave and a horse-shoe file; and an old blue cap with the word "Conductor" on the front.

There was no mistaking Bob's seriousness as he motioned his prisoner to be seated on the rustic bench, and then, with an air of authority, removed Walter's hat, and handed it to him to hold.

"Wher's th' Mayor," asked Bob, as he turned to Aleck.

"Jest stepped out th' back door," he replied.

"Take off yer hat in court," shouted Bob, pointing his club at Aleck.

Aleck removed his hat with mock politeness, and said: "Do y' know what charge t' make?"

"Whatever it's worth," replied Bob. "I'll let th' mayor set his own price."

Janie, who was standing on the veranda when Aleck told William Henry that Bob had arrested Walter, had gone to tell her mother, and Mrs. Talbut came rushing from the Sanitarium, demanding excitedly: "Where's th' man who is *re*spon*sable* fer this out*ragus* pro*ceed*ing?"

"Don't fret, mother; it's all right," said Walter.

"Bob Bos*cumb*, I'm dumbfoun*ded* that you should be *con*cerned in such contem*table* con*duct*. What's Wal*ter* done, *I'd* like t' know?"

"He's kermitted assolt an' bat'ry, widder; that's what 'es done," said Aleck.

"Well, no *one* 'ud *ever con*vict him uv salt*ing* and batter*ing* you."

"Not me; 'twuz m' son," replied Aleck.

"Well, you *an'* yer son are *e*qual*ee dis*-repu*table*."

"Hello! What's the excitement?" said Joe to Aleck, as he came wheeling Mrs. Arlington back across the lawn, on their return from "Sodaville."

"Yer chief uv perlice, here,—" but that was as far as Aleck got, for, when Joe turned his head in the direction indicated, and caught sight of Bob's uniform,

he burst into laughter that brought Mildred out onto the lawn to where they were, to find out what was happening.

"Y' look like a change in th' weather," said Joe, in an undertone to Bob, after he had surveyed him carefully.

"Yer chief uv perlice," continued Aleck, "has 'rested th' pris'ner fer assolt an' bat'ry. 'Splain what 'e did t' y', Bill," but William Henry was so busy telling Mildred about what was going on that his father had to repeat his request.

"Well, Bill needn't," said Joe. "What Walter did to Bill was a plenty, and we all saw him do it. Chief, hold the prisoner in ten dollars bail, and then hold yourself in five dollars bail as a witness, or lock yourself up with him.

"Bail!" exclaimed Bob. "Where can I git bail."

"Well, I'll have t' go bail for both of you, I suppose; prisoner, I release you; Chief, go home," and Bob saluted, and walked away, with his head up and his chest thrown out, wrapped in a rapture of pride over the attention he was attracting as chief of police.

Turning to Walter, Joe said: "I ought

to have fined you ten dollars for making a vinegar vat out of me. How y' been?"

"Me? Oh, I'm all right," he replied, intentionally loud, so that Mildred would be sure to catch his tone of careless disregard.

When William Henry heard Mildred mutter to herself, 'The stubborn little mule,' he decided to force an issue with young Talbut, and said to them all, with pretended pleasantness: "Now, that we are all here, this would be a good opportunity for young Mr. Talbut to make his apologies."

"I took Miss Arlington at her word," replied Walter; "if she did not mean what she said, then she owes us both an apology."

"Oh, the spiteful little brute," said Mildred, in an undertone.

"Why not decide for yourselves, here and now, and teach him a lesson he'll not forget?" whispered William Henry.

"I will, just for spite," she answered; and in her fit of anger she approached her mother, saying: "Mother, I have something to tell you, which I had rather tell you here and now than at any other

time;" then, looking straight at Walter, she said: "I have chosen for my husband, Mr. Stripe."

William Henry put his arm around her and Walter started toward him, but his mother restrained him and pursuaded him to walk away with her and Janie.

While all was excitement for the moment, and Aleck was rubbing his hands, and saying: "You've done it, Bill; you've done it," Joe was hurriedly whispering to Mrs. Arlington, and urging her to be brave and speak.

Finally, she held out her hand toward Joe and said: "And I, my child, I have chosen Mr. Miller."

William Henry's arm dropped from Mildred's side and he was rigid with rage; and Aleck fell over into a flower bed.

Before William Henry could recover himself, Joe had wheeled the chair close to Mildred, and Mrs. Arlington had said: "Come quickly, my child, I must go to our room at once," and Mildred did not even wait to be excused.

When Joe came back across the lawn William Henry was helping his father out of the flower bed.

"What y' getting up so early for, Aleck, y' just went to bed?" said Joe.

There was evil in William Henry's eye, and he snapped at Joe, as he passed, "This is some trick, but it won't work with me."

Joe's only answer was: "I think your shoe is untied again," and he walked on, leaving William Henry scraping the top soil off of his father.

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Bob's Gift of Gab Entertains Joe with a Continuous Conversation.

William Henry and his father, and Mildred were the only ones who knew that Mrs. Arlington had announced her engagement to Joe Miller, and all chance for any one else at the Sanitarium, or at the Corners, finding it out from either Mildred or her mother was prevented by a message from Mrs. Arlington's brother, handed to her as she returned to the room.

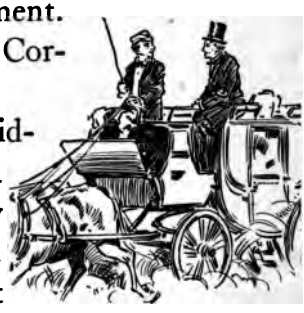
The message called her at once to her home in Indianapolis, on a matter of more importance than the settlement of her husband's estate.

Mildred made their hasty departure an excuse for not seeing William Henry again.

Joe rode over with Mrs. Arlington and Mildred on the stage, to the station.

The presence of other passengers prevented their discussing the important incident that had just occurred; and so, Joe checked the trunks, put them safely

aboard the train, and said 'good bye,' without even a word of comment.



Then he rode back to the Corners, he and Bob, alone.

"Prize bred gal, that widder," said Bob. "Pity she's a leavin' us. An' that dorter uv hern aint no slouch neither. I gorry, I had t' laff that day when Sandy's cub swatted Bill Stripe on her 'count. He's a pippin, that kid; he's got more sand in 'im than a box uv store strawberries afore they's washed. Say, Joe, do y' see that feller over there without any hat on, settin' them bean poles? Th' one with th' 'hatchet-face' an' th' mallet-shaped head? Well, he's Clem Ebers; he come close t' hirin' out onest with a travlin' show t' mock animals. Whoa, whoa; we got lots uv time. Hello, Clem! See here a minit—'quainted with our new Mayor, Mr. Miller? Say, ken y' 'blige 'im with a specimen uv yer mockin'? Oh, 'e aint perticular; what ever y' feel like, a hog 'er a jackass. Gosh, Joe, th' way he mocks a jackass you'd think he wuz one. An' he ken make a hog uv himself as good as any as is on th' stage t' day. Give us a

couple uv grunts, Clem. Hear that, Joe? Jest as nateral. I gorry, it must be born in 'im. Ken y' spare a 'hee-haw', Clem? Hear that? 'Taint no effert fer 'im tall. Now treat to a glass uv soda warter 'fore we go. That's th' stuff! I knowed a feller onestwhat cud make that same noise in his sleep, nen when I'd wake 'im up he cuden make it 'tall. Thank y', Clem; en'time y' want a lift th' way I'm headed, jest hop in. Yer welcome. Git app. Clem 'ud a bin gone with that theatre troupe that time unly fer 'is folks bein' sech cast iron Methodists, an' havin' acute scruples agin all skin games. Well, ef there aint ole man Skinner carryin' a trundle bed. I wonder where he borrowed that; peers t' me he's gittin' a little previous fer a man what's unly just married 'is third wife fer th' first time. Yep, that's what I said, 'third wife fer th' first time.' He married 'is first wife twiste; his second un three times, an' 'ud a married her agin, I guess, ef she'd lived. I dun know, but folks say th' reason fer 'em separatin so steady wuz jest his pure cussidness. Hello, deakin; what's th' reason fer th' trundle-bed? 'Taint? Y' don't say so;

it's a new patent folding corn cutter, aye? Well, deakin, when my corns git t' folding I'll let y' cut em. Git app. Say, Joe, y' never knowed Glick Scruthers, did y'? No? Well, he wuz 'afore you come; lived over on four mile run. I gorry, Glick wuz a 'buzz'; uster tell 'round 'bout his forefathers comin' over here in th' Plymouth Rock, er some other steamer; an' alus harpin on his high breedin' an' layin' claim t' blood relationship with every one in th' Old Testament. Acordin' t' Glick's tell you'd think some uv his cousins helped Eve pick apples in Adam's first orchard. Well, t' make a long story short, Glick sparked a gal at Saw Mill Center fer two summers running, an' 'nen got tarred an' feathered fer breach uv promise. Now, I see by th' paper where he's goin' t' be run fer Coroner on th' "Dry" ticket over in Wetmore. Whoa, whoa; 'Hey!' 'Hey!' Yes, I'm a callin' you. What do y' think I'm doin', stoppin' here t' exercise my voice? Well I know yer name 'aint 'Hey,' but y' needn't t' git so persnikertee about it; an' jest fer that I won't tell y' that ole Miss Young wants y' t' bring 'er four dozen more fresh eggs, neither; git

app. He's an ornery whelp, that Stalwart Jones. Th' reason I yelled 'Hey,' wuz cuz he alus gits hot when I call 'im 'Wart' fer short. Stalwart used t' be askeered uv toads when 'e wuz a little shaver, an' th' end uv his name bein' so fittin' tew his fear, we boys jest nick-named 'im 'Wart.' Aint it funny how some folks is named so comic. Dad useter tell us uv a colored fam'ly named 'White' what lived next to a white family named 'Black,' an' th' 'White' kids bein' black, an' th' 'Black' kids bein' white, th' neighburs useter call th' colored kids 'white trash,' an' th' White kids, 'black rascals.' Whoa; no, Miss Tethers, 'taint come yet. Yes, I felt all 'round th' outside uv th' bag; 'fit wuz in there I cud feel it. No, no more mail 'till t'morrow, now. Yer welcome; git app. Miss Tethers won a years subscripshun free t' 'Th' Tom-boy's Magazine' fer writin' th' best recipe fer how t' climb a tree without wrinklin yer overskirt. She's a 'clip;' rides straddle, an' kin wallop a base ball out uv shape. I told 'er she ort t' study t' be a perfeshional nurse onest, soast when she got married she cud be with her husband more, as I

figured he'd be in the hospital most uv th' time. Whoa; hole th' lines, will y', Joe, I got t' run in with this bottle uv eel oil fer t' limber up Zeb Trisbitt's jeints, he's in bed with th' mumps in 'is knees. Some sez it's conflamitory rheumatics; won't be but a minute. Gosh, I didn' spec t' be so long. Thank y'. Git app. Zeb's ole maid sister's beau wuz there, so I stopped fer to put in a few complerments fer her cookin' cause zis about th' lass chance she'll have to git hitched. He's some 'new-comer' from Fly Creek, helpin' out over at Stebbin's place, an' spen's 'is spare time workin' on invenshuns. He wuz showin' a new fangled combination can opener an' tunin' fork. Sez he's 'scovered how t' make perpetchuel motion go without stopping fer six days. He seems lucid, ceptin' sometimes when his eyes looks empty; but then, she's a gittin' too fur along t' be perticler; guess she'd be willing t' put up with most enything now that's got whiskers. Wuz y' ever married, Joe? No? Well, I spose you've got yer excuse. I gorry, I never fergit th' summer I thort I wuz in love. I got fergitfull; I wuz off m' feed;

couldn' sleep, an' my eyes wartered. She wuz one uv them over purty gals, an' got t' takin' kensiderble pride in bein' th' cause uv my kendishun, until dad put up th' dog-ondest job on me y' ever heered uv. Got th' soder warter feller at th' drug store t' dose my soder with Doc Turnbull's sure cure fer hay fever; an' in less un three days m' eyes stopped warterin; I wuz eatin' ev'rything I cud git m' han's on, an' I fell sound t' sleep one evenin' listenen t' her tellin' me how she didn't blame m' fer lovin' her. Gosh, wuzn't she mad when dad tole 'er what he'd done. An' y' talk about luck. I got everthing back I'd gave tew 'er, but a big fifty-cent valentine that she'd wore out showin ter people as a trophy uv her kentroll over men folks; so, that made m' three ninety looser on 'er alto-gether includin all her soders an' our roun' trip excursion t' Pitt Falls an' back. Dad said twuz no use uv a feller's tradin' th' sweat uv his brow fer love like her's, even with a purty thing like her t' boot, when th' law wouldn't allow me t' boot it after I got it. Uv late years marriage has got tew one sided

fer me anyway. A man can't even fumigate his feelins with a little authority, lest some lawyer locks 'im up in jail fer contempt of matermoney. Well, here we be; did y' want t' git out here, ur ride up t' th' post offiss? All right; I 'spose I've 'bout talked yer arm off; whoa! Say, Joe, y' fergot t' tell m' how y' liked my perlice suit."

"No, I didn't forget; I just refrained. You see, Bob, I've quit using cuss words and I don't want to begin again."

"Gosh, Joe, is it that bad? Git app."

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The Mystery Surrounding Mrs. Arlington's Departure Grows Deeper.

So much mystery surrounded the departure of Mrs. Arlington that the "why" for her sudden leaving was all guess work on the part of the patients at the Sanitarium and the crones at the Corners. And the mystery was more so, when it became known that she had gone to her beautiful home in Indianapolis, and was still there, although every shade was drawn and the house apparently deserted.

For over two weeks all business, love affairs and apologies were at a standstill, and no one but Mrs. Arlington's brother and a stranger were admitted.

William Henry returned to his office in Indianapolis, and, while studying out how to check-mate Joe Miller's last move, also worried himself into a fever of fretfulness over receiving no word from Mildred.

Walter moped away the time around the Corners, impatiently looking for a

letter of explanation or regret from Mildred.

He was not aware of what had taken place immediately after he left William Henry standing close to Mildred with his arm around her waist.

Joe took to the hills every morning with his black valise full of vinegar bottles to canvass the country for the John Burbage Company, and reported regularly each evening at the "General Delivery," to hear the postmaster say again: "Nothing yet, Joe."

After waiting for more than a week, a letter from Mildred came to him, saying that her mother was improving, which was the first intimation Joe had had that Mrs. Arlington was ill.

The letter further said, that in case Mr. Miller should "happen to be coming to Indianapolis" any time during the following week, that they would be glad to see him.

Walter was on the "suspended" list of the John Burbage Company, and could make no report to them on the progress of their new vinegar buyer.

This gave Joe an excellent excuse to "happen" to be coming to Indianapolis to get acquainted with his employer, and to find out whether his services were satisfactory.

Walter had received a curt note from the firm, suggesting that he drop in and get his "walking papers" and also his wages. And so, he and Joe went up to the city together, about a week later, taking Sandy and Janie with them, just for the ride, "unbeknowns" to Mrs. Talbut.

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The Vinegar Buyer Is Called a Few Names Other Than Joe Miller.

At Mrs. Arlington's house, the morning that the curtains were raised to let in the light, the windows were opened wide to let in the air, fragrant with perfume from the rose garden; and everyone was as busy and as happy as when a babe is born to heretofore childless parents, who have long since given up hope.

Mildred and her mother walked among the flower beds, and when Mildred said: "See, mother, aren't they pretty?" Mrs. Arlington replied: "Yes, dear, very pretty; everything looks more beautiful to me now than ever before;" and Spot, the house dog, in the path just ahead, wagged his bushy tail so frantically that Mildred laughed and said: "Even Spot knows that you can see him wag his tail," and Mrs. Arlington laughed too, and gave him an extra "smoothing" down the back.

This miraculous result, which had attended the efforts of a noted occulist from the east, had not yet been made public, so that only a few close friends knew of Mrs. Arlington's happiness.

James, the butler, was so beside himself with joy that he scolded some of the parlor furniture for having a few unvarnished scars; and the pastry cook was studying up on "food for the eye," in the way of fancy decorations for cakes and pies, and already found herself scalloping the tea biscuits and stamping holes in the cookies.

Mr. Burbage called just before luncheon, and when James brought word to him that Mrs. Arlington and Mildred were still dressing, the brother laughed and said that he didn't blame his sister for wanting to look in the looking glass, as it was the first chance she had had to see herself in twenty years.

The telephone bell rang and James called Mr. Burbage to the phone to answer some one at his office.

"I'm coming over now, and when he returns I will fire him on sight," said Mr. Burbage, over the phone.

Then he explained to James that the person referred to was a "lunk-head," Bradley, from Boscomb's Corners, who had been sampling vinegar for the firm, and that it had taken him two weeks to buy six bushels of rotten potatoes, a crate of sour apples and three barrels of bad vinegar.

The door bell rang, and James ushered William Henry into the reception room, just as Mildred came down the stairs to greet her uncle.

This was their first meeting since her "spite" engagement to him, about which her uncle knew nothing.

"I called to inquire whether the report is true that Mrs. Arlington's sight has been restored," he asked.

"Yes, indeed; five days ago, by a very noted eye specialist from the east," replied Mr. Burbage.

"Yes, dear mother can see as plainly as ever, and she is so happy."

"And have you thought how very fortunate that is, at this critical time, when her future happiness is in danger," said William Henry, in a low and very serious tone.

"Why, what do you mean. Who would dare to harm my sister," demanded Mr. Burbage.

"This adventurer, whom she had promised to marry; this fortune hunter, Joe Miller," he replied.

"What! My sister engaged to be married to Joe Miller? Why, Mildred," and he turned to his niece for an explanation.

"Hasn't mother told you?"

"Not a word. She has often written to me about how kind this Miller was to both of you, and she told me of his solicitude for her comfort, but never of this. You say this man is a what?" he asked of William Henry.

"An adventurer, a fortune hunter; what other motive could a beggar have but money, in being attentive to a wealthy lady, who is blind?" he replied.

"Hum; yes," and Mr. Burbage was thoughtful. "What is your opinion, Mildred?"

The doctor's orders had prevented Mrs. Arlington from engaging in conversation on any subject that might excite her;

therefore, she had not, as yet, seriously discussed her opinion of William Henry's gasp of horror and look of terror when she announced her engagement to Mr. Miller. Mildred, nevertheless, had been doing a lot of thinking for herself, and her reply was her own independent conclusion.

She took particular pains to look William Henry straight in the eye as she said: "That Mr. Miller is absolutely honest," and her opinion carried with it a veiled slap at William Henry that he wasn't looking for.

He bit his thin under lip, and his eyes shifted nervously.

"As Mrs. Arlington's legal adviser it is my duty to persuade her to break off this engagement, but, now that her sight has been restored, she can see for herself that his very appearance is that of a monte-bank."

"Come, let us talk this matter over at my office, Mr. Stripe. Tell your mother I will return, Mildred, but not a word of this to her, understand," and Mr. Burbage led the way into the hall, opened the street door, and passed out.

William Henry lingered a moment to whisper to Mildred: "I had hoped to find you alone and tell you how you have misjudged me."

"I hardly think I care to listen," she said, "so it is—" but the roaring impatience of Mr. Burbage cut short their conversation.

"Well, hurry up; I ought to be at my office now, to fire that lunk-headed vinegar buyer," and William Henry obeyed the "rush-order" with such blind promptness that he had to be assisted to his feet, and after James had picked up the scattered umbrellas and stood them in a corner in the hall way, he telephoned the furniture man to bring up a new hat rack.

Joe Hears Some News That Gives Him "Goose Flesh."

It was about an hour later when the bell rang, and James opened the door and looked into the face of Joe, as he stood on the mat, with his hat in his hand, and a long narrow pasteboard box under his arm.

As Joe passed into the hallway, James closed the outside door, and said, "Will you step into the reception room, sir?"

He had expected to see some "fine fixings," but the magnificent furnishings of Mrs. Arlington's home simply awed Joe into a whisper, and he said: "No, no; this room is all right; besides, I'm not dressed for a reception."

"Who shall I tell Mrs. Arlington wishes to see her, sir?" asked James.

"Tell her every one at Boscomb's Corners wants to see her, including me; but just say that I'm here first."

"And for you, sir, what name shall I say, if you please?"

James was so especially pleasant and polite in saying "if you please," that Joe began to feel less uneasy, and took the liberty to say: "You better find out if I please, first. I might not suit."

While on duty, the dignity of James' position would not permit him to crack a smile at any kind of a joke made by a visitor; therefore, his features did not relax or evidence any recognition of Joe's pleasantry, but remained veneered in a protection of three-ply pomposity.

"Will you rest your hat?" he asked, as he reached out his hand to receive Joe's old "plug" with its frayed rim.

"How's that," asked Joe, as though not quite catching the meaning of James' question.

"Will you rest your hat?" repeated James, a little more precise.

"Does it look tired?" asked Joe, as he turned it around and examined it on all sides. "It had a long 'nap' when I first got it, but that was a long time ago; and since then, they've taken a little bit off the top, and some off the sides, until the lining beats the band," and Joe passed the hat to James.

So far as any outward indication of his inward feelings was concerned, James' features were as unreplying as the mouth of a cement cat.

"I would like to give Mrs. Arlington your name, sir," he said, with measured distinctness.

"Yes, so would I," replied Joe, "but I don't think she'd care for it," and again James' countenance was coated with an indentable expression of what Joe styled "Cavetis-mentis" in folks who had to be cautioned to stop drooling while listening to a funny story. "You just tell her that old 'Sand Crabs' is here; she'll know who you mean," said Joe.

Before James had time to ask for any explanation regarding "Sand Crabs," Mildred came to the head of the stairs, and asked: "James, has uncle returned?"

"Not as yet, Miss; it's a gentleman with a large box of sand crabs; he says your mother knows about them, Miss. I'll send him around to the kitchen."

Mildred's curiosity brought her half way down the stairs, and when she saw Joe, her delight brought her the rest of the way, two steps at a time.

"Why, Mr. Miller! I didn't know that you were here. Come right in," and Mildred pulled him along by the hand into the sitting room, and made him feel at home, for her welcome was genuine. "Tell mother, James."

"Shall I say 'Sand Crabs' is here, Miss?" he asked.

"Why, James," said Mildred, in a tone of surprise and reproof.

"Don't blame James," said Joe, "I told him to say 'Sand Crabs.'"

"Oh, Mr. Miller, I'd like to hear mother laugh when she hears that. All right, James, 'Sand Crabs.'"

Mildred motioned Joe to be seated, and James vanished with Mildred's orders and Joe's hat, leaving Joe awkwardly hugging the long paste board box under his arm.

"When did you arrive?" asked Mildred.

"Just this morning, I came up on that old cold molasses special; you know that train that goes so slow that sometimes it's standing still and they think it's going; but t'day we got in an hour and

forty minutes before the regular time."

"And how did that happen?" she asked.

"The engineer was trying to catch up to a cow on the track ahead of us, but the cow beat us to town."

"Now, Mr. Miller, that's another one of your stories," laughed Mildred.

James reported that Mrs. Arlington had gone for a drive.

"Oh, that is so," said Mildred, "I had forgotten."

Joe arose, disappointed, "hitched" the long box up more closely under his arm, and edged toward the door, for his first thought was that he was not wanted.

"Mother won't be gone long; won't you wait?" asked Mildred; and the invitation was so sincere that it relieved Joe's feelings, until he almost laughed as he said: "Not if I thought I could catch up to her."

"What, catch up to a span of horses that can trot a mile in three minutes?"

"Then I guess I better wait," said Joe, and he was glad that he was "wanted;" then the long box under his arm slipped down a bit, as though to remind him that he was forgetting something.

"Here, I'm forgetting all about what I brought for your mother," and he placed the box on the table, removed the cover, and took out a dozen American Beauties, tied with a long, wide ribbon.

He shook them out, passing them proudly across the table to Mildred, saying: "That's a regular city boquet; six dollars and a half with th' sash on."

"Oh, how lovely; what keeps them so fresh, I wonder?" she asked.

"I don't know," said Joe, "the price I guess," and he lifted the ends of the long sash from the floor and placed them carefully on the table.

Then suddenly remembering something else he had forgotten, he took from the long box a two pound basket of candy and handed it to Mildred.

"That's for you; made fresh every hour, and what you don't eat right away I can take back and have cooked over for y'," and they both laughed and he sat down, for he was feeling quite welcome again.

"I haven't told you the news," said

Mildred, "because I wanted mother to surprise you; but, for fear that someone may drop in and tell you first, I'll tell you."

"I know," said Joe, "you're going to tell me you've broken off the engagement with Henry Stripe. When your mother announced her engagement to me that cooked his goose. I spose he thinks it's true yet."

"True?" exclaimed Mildred. "Why, isn't it?"

Joe looked up surprised, and asked: "Why, didn't your mother tell y'?"

"Not a word," replied Mildred.

"I thought she'd tell you," he said, and looked away, embarrassed, and picked at the table cover, at a loss to know just what else to say. "Then, it's because your mother is too tender hearted; she don't want to have me laughed at," and he tried to smile.

"Why, every one thinks you are her intended husband," said Mildred.

"My, no," said Joe. "I was just your mother's pretended intended; we were only making believe. We just did it to trick Henry Stripe, and to save you."

"Then, there is no engagement between

yourself and my mother?" she said, and clasped her hands in an ecstacy of delight, and Joe shrank back in his chair, ashamed.

Mildred's joy hurt Joe's heart so, that it tried to hide in his throat, but he swallowed it bravely, and managed to say: "Why, there never was any."

"Oh, I'm so glad; I'm so glad," and her face beamed with happiness.

After Joe had swallowed his heart again, he rallied his senses to a weak attempt at cheerfulness, and said: "I don't blame you for being glad. I wouldn't be much to be proud of as a stepfather."

Joe's attempt to hide his feelings was uncovered by the unsteadiness in his voice, and Mildred realized that she was guilty of heedless delight that entitled Joe to a quick explanation.

"Oh, not that, Mr. Miller, not that;" and Mildred spoke with such a feeling of regret for her thoughtlessness, that, for a third time, Joe was lifted from a dungeon of dejection into the sunshine of a renewed welcome, and Mildred made him think that he was not only "wanted," but almost "needed."

"I'm glad, because Henry Stripe says—"

"Well, what that fellow says about me I wouldn't bother you t' tell; but, has your engagement to him been broken off?"

"Not formally," replied Mildred.

"Oh, I see," said Joe, "you're just letting it cool off until it freezes up, and then you're going to break it off, I suppose?"

"But, all this, Mr. Miller, is not the news I had reference to. It is something of far greater interest to me, and something you least expect."

"Well, in this world, it's what you do expect, and what you don't expect, and what's sure to come true," and Joe faced Mildred, placed his hands on the table in front of him, and leaned forward to listen.

"Well," she began, and paused to draw in a very long breath; then, turning her face toward Joe, she said, slowly and separating her words impressively: "My mother's sight has been restored."

"Your mother's sight has been restored?" he repeated, in a stupor of surprise. Then his voice thrilled with joy, for his heart was in a riot of happiness.

Then, as though it were drawn from

the very depth of his every sense of thankfulness, he droned, with intense fervor the one word, "God!" and he clasped his hands, and the gladness ran out of his eyes. "She can see; oh, she can see th' hills and th' valleys, and th' flowers that I brought her," and he touched the roses gently, and his eyes were aglow.

Then, as though a knife had pierced some vital part, the blood rushed from his face and hands back to his heart, and left his cheeks pale and his fingers trembling.

He looked down, and clutched at his shabby coat, saying, in a loud whisper, "And she can see me."

He arose quickly, and started toward the door that led to the street, with one hand holding his coat closed, for the buttons were missing.

"I wonder if James could find my hat," he said, trying to improve the appearance of his hair with his hand.

"Why, Mr. Miller, what has come over you?" she asked, as she went toward him.

"I don't know; feels like goose flesh.

Did you ever hear that song, 'Back to the Woods'? I think I'll go home and sing it to myself," and he tried to laugh a little, and to smile, but it was not so.

"Think of the hours mother has listened to you and laughed," said Mildred, trying to ease his discomfort.

"And now she'll laugh without listening," said Joe. "No, no, I'll have to look different from this, or else talk to her from behind a screen."

"Oh, mother won't care how you look, Mr. Miller."

"Well, it will be a good thing for me if she doesn't," replied Joe; "but there is something I ought to get."

"Let James get it for you."

Mildred rang the bell, and when James appeared, Joe said: "James, get me a clean shave and a hair cut, please." Then, turning to Mildred, Joe said: "If James will just get my hat, I'll get the rest."

As he took his hat from James, he looked it over, and said: "Thanks, James; is it rested?" but the jest found no favor with James, so Joe turned to Mildred, and said: "I want to get a hot application for my hat anyway; then, I

want to get my shoes massaged and have my face manicured."

"And you will come back," she asked.

"Oh, yes; I'll come back; and I'll be exhibit 'A' in parlor 'B.' Is my hat on straight?" This last was to James, as Joe closed the door between them.

"Don't you think Mr. Miller funny, James?" asked Mildred.

But James mistook her question for a command, and replied: "I'll do my best, Miss; but, 'twas very hard at times, to keep from laughing in the gentleman's face."

—o o—

Mildred Stakes Her Future Happiness on the Honesty of Joe Miller.

To make Joe feel sure that he was welcome at the Arlington home, Mildred stood at the window and waved to him as he looked back from the corner.

"Dear Mr. Miller," she said, intending it only for her own ears, but James' ears were also open, and he could not help but hear.

"Am I to say that you are in, Miss, when he returns?"

"Of course, James; if money could repay him for all of his kindness to us, I know that mother would willingly give him half her fortune."

In answer to the door bell, James returned, followed by William Henry.

"I beg your pardon if I intrude, Miss Arlington, but, after the talk I have just had with your uncle, I felt it my duty to see you again."

As Mildred did not request James to remain, William Henry and Mildred were left alone.

"You have nothing to fear from me," he said, "my interest in you now is the same as it was before you doubted me."

"I believe you," replied Mildred, with a meaning which William Henry missed.

"You do," he exclaimed.

But Mildred erased his smile of pleasure with an icy glare, and said: "Yes; that you are as insincere now as you were when you betrayed yourself before us all."

"Why, I merely gave way to an outburst of surprise, which you hastily accepted as evidence of my insincerity, through the misinterpretation of that man Miller. I am still your mother's attorney, and it is my duty to save her from this—this trickster. The engagement between them must be broken off."

Mildred's disinclination to engage in a discussion with William Henry finally impressed him with the fact that he could not argue his way back into her friendship, but must "do something."

"If I save your mother from this danger which I warn you of," he said, "would you consider me worthy of your confidence?"

"I do not think my mother is in any

danger from Mr. Miller," she answered.

"Then you do not share your uncle's opinion. He believes, as I do, that some undue influence is being exercised over your mother."

"I have never yet had an example of my mother's bad judgment," replied Mildred, calmly.

"Then you, too, trust this montebank?" There was no answer. "How much faith have you in this fellow." Again there was no reply. In desperation William Henry put his head in a halter by which Mildred could lead him to a well of bitter water. "Have you so much faith in him, that, if I prove him false, you will restore me to your confidence?"

"Yes; provided, that if you fail you are to forever cease your attentions to me."

"Agreed! I accept the terms. Will he be here again to-day?" he asked.

"Again? Why do you say again."

"Because I saw him leaving the house as I approached, and I know he has not seen your mother yet."

"And how do you know so much, may I ask."

"Your mother just returned from a drive. The carriage passed through the gate as I came in."

"He has promised to return," she said.

"Good. Then I will be here with papers for your mother to sign, which she shall sign at his request, and prove himself to be the trickster that he is. I will see your mother then."

William Henry hurried to his office to prepare the trick which was to trip Joe Miller, and Mildred hurried to her mother's room to explain to her how she had staked her future happiness on the honesty of Mr. Miller.

Mrs. Arlington had returned from her ride, but, when James informed her of the presence of William Henry, she directed the coachman to take her for another drive, to avoid meeting him.

Mildred was so elated with her advantage over William Henry that she was fairly bursting with a desire to tell her secret to some one, and, for fear that she might forget household propriety and tell it to James first, she went out into the garden, where she could talk to herself and not be overheard.

She stopped in front of a rose bush, stood perfectly still for a few seconds, and then she said to herself, but loud enough to be heard several feet away: "If some one don't hurry up and come, I'll scream."

"Please don't scream, Miss Arlington, I'll go. I didn't think you saw me," said a voice from the other side of the rose bush.

"Why, Walter! What are you doing here," she exclaimed, as he stepped in front of her.

It was a good thing for Walter that Mildred spoke in a friendly tone, for her features were busy expressing fright and pleasure at the same time, and would have worried him in the analyzing of his reception.

"I was afraid, if announced, that you would refuse to see me; so I crept in the side way and out here into the garden, in hopes of your doing just what you have done, find me."

"I didn't find you. I didn't even see you. I was talking to myself."

Mildred spoke so pleasantly that Walter held out his hand, and when she

accepted it, he said: "I thank you; I am glad we are, at least, friends again," and they strolled on through the grounds, while Mildred told him all that had happened since he saw her in the arms of Henry Stripe.

And, when they were quite some distance from the house, Mildred made no objection when Walter kissed her—even for the third time.

—oo—

Miranda Goes on The War Path for Sandy with The Chief of Police.

It was really too bad that no one was in the house to enjoy Mr. Miller's return, excepting James.

Everything was new, from hat to shoes; frock coat; a clean shave; cuffs, and a hair cut, and he had put the clothes on in such a hurry, that the clerk in the store had overlooked the "tags," and there were three white price tickets tacked on to his new suit—one to his coat collar in the back; one to the leg of his trousers at the heel, and a third, to the bottom of his vest in the front, which showed when he pulled back his coat.

His high hat was a little too small, and his patent leather shoes much too large, but they were the best he could get in a hurry, and he proposed to arrive "on time," even if he had to come in chunks.

To add more "juice" to the picture, he had brought with him two pint boxes

of ice cream, one in each hand; so that, when James opened the door and said "this way, sir," the sight that met his eyes was a thing of beauty and a joy forever.

Joe's mind was so concerned in speculation on his greeting by Mrs. Arlington, that he walked right on into the sitting room, as if the house was his instead of hers. And, as he stood in the center of the room, with his hat on, and an ice cream box in each hand, he was more confused by his "aloneness," than he would have been by the presence of the whole family.

He wasn't just sure whether he ought to ask James to hold the ice cream, while he removed his hat, or to continue holding the ice cream and ask James to remove his hat. However, after the embarrassment of the silence had worn off, he placed the boxes on the table, and removed his hat, saying, as he handed it to James: "I guess we better rest this one." Then he said, confidentially: "James, I expect some friends of mine along here pretty soon; can you let them in without the pass-word? There are only two."

"If they are friends of yours, sir, that's enough," replied James.

"It is, aye?" said Joe. "Well, two are all there are anyway, so y' won't be bothered by any more."

"I mean, sir, they will be welcome."

"Oh, thank y', James; thank y'," and Joe held out his hand.

"I'm obliged, but I'm not allowed, sir," said James.

"Well, I'll take your hand and take th' blame, too. I 'spose y' don't get one of these very often, so I'll give y' a good one," and when Joe let go, James' fingers had the fidgets for some minutes.

"Thank you," said James; "since you were here Mrs. Arlington has been in, and gone again."

"My! She's as swift as Finnegan; 'off again—on again—gone again,'" replied Joe.

"Yes, sir; she's seeing all the sights, sir, as fast as she can, sir."

"Yes? Well, I hope she don't miss seeing me, James."

"And she left word that if you came before she returned, to tell you that the house is yours."

"The house is mine?" repeated Joe, as

he looked from wall to wall, and from ceiling to floor. "Well, I'm glad that I have something left after losing my job. James, I just called on th' man I've been working for, and it took him less than a minute, by the clock, to tell me what he thought of me, pay me off, and be without me."

From the window Joe saw Sandy and Janie at the front gate.

"Here they are, James," he said; and before they had time to ring the bell, James was holding the door wide open and bowing and bidding them to walk right in.

James' bows and "scrapes" so confused Sandy that he thought he was being mistaken for some one else, and he said: "We're only Joe's friends, mister."

"He's here, sir; come right in; th' little lady, too, sir."

Joe looked with delight on Sandy and Janie in their new outfits, while they gazed in wonder about them at the beautiful "fixings."

"Sit down, and make yourself at home, and tell me how you like my house."

"Oh, is this your house, Uncle Joe?" asked Janie.

"So James says," replied Joe.

"It's a dream, Joe; it's a dream," and Sandy's eyes bulged out, as he looked about and blinked as though half awake.

"Then sit down before you wake up," and pointed to the sofa.

Just before they sat down, James said to Sandy: "Let me take your hat, sir."

James' "claw-hammer" coat must have given Sandy the idea that James was a professor of magic art, for Sandy replied: "If you want to do a trick, borrow Joe's hat, it's bigger'n mine."

When they were seated, they both sank so far into the soft cushioned sofa, that Janie said: "It don't feel like y' wuz setten on nuthin, does it, dad?"

"Say, Joe, maybe we better set out in th' kitchen," said Sandy.

"Not much," replied Joe; "there's nothing of mine too good for my friends. James, bring us three spoons and a clean towel for our nakpin, will you, please. Hold on, make it four spoons, James." And while James was gone, Joe placed a

box of ice cream on the table, saying: "We'd better eat this before it melts."

"Is ice cream good on beans, Joe?" asked Sandy, as he and Janie took seats at the table.

"Fine; puts them right in cold storage," replied Joe; and when James came with the spoons Joe handed Sandy and Janie each one, and took one himself.

"Who is this fourth one for?" asked James.

"Why, that's for you; dip in," said Joe.

"Oh, but I'm not allowed, sir," replied James.

"You said the house was mine, James, and I know you go with the house; so here," and Joe filled the spoon for him.

As James raised the spoon to his lips his hand trembled and he ate with fear.

"It's all right, ain't it, James," said Joe, smiling and smacking his lips.

"Yes sir; but what would I do if Mrs. Arlington were to come in now, sir," pleaded James.

"Why, get another spoon, of course," said Joe, "we're no better than she is."

Joe handed him another spoonful, and James was so excited that he took it wrong end to, and put the wrong end of the spoon in his mouth just as the door bell rang.

The spoon handle went down James' throat and the ice cream went down his shirt front; and nothing but the large end of the spoon was left in sight for Joe to get hold of and save James from coughing to death.

"Oh, Lord!" he gasped, still coughing, "that ice cream is stuck in my throat."

"No 'taint, it's stuck on your shirt front," said Joe, and he scraped it off with the spoon and proved it to him.

From answering the bell, James returned with the word that there was a policeman at the door; and also with the startling information that he was looking for a man named Sandy Talbut.

Instantly the ice cream party was in a hush of fear, and Sandy's eyes were sticking out as handy as door knobs.

Janie was first to break the silence: "After dad? Why, dad hain't done nothin', have y', dad?"

"Why, no; I—" then turning to Joe, he

asked: "You paid fer this suit didn' y', Joe?"

"Same time as I paid for my own," replied Joe. "Tell him our suits are all paid for, James. Here, hold on a minute; you and Janie get behind the curtains there, and I'll find out what he wants, and if he wants too much, I'll hit him with a pint of ice cream. Show him in, James."

Sandy and Janie hid behind the curtains and Joe stood waiting to face the officer.

When they caught sight of each other, both Joe and the officer nearly fell over with surprise.

It was Bob Boscomb, Chief of Police of Boscomb's Corners, wearing that same uniform which caused Joe to almost collapse once before.

"Why, Mayor! I didn't know you wuz here. I'm after Sandy. He's abscondered away with Janie, an' come t' Indiernapolis. Me an' th' widder tracked him t' this house, but, I guess it's all right, bein' as you're here."

"Where is the widow," asked Joe.

"At th' corner, waitin' fer my report."

"Report? Well, bring her in and we'll have an explosion right here," said Joe.

"She'll come, if I jest make a motion," replied Bob.

"Then it's moved and seconded that you make a motion," and Bob saluted Joe and disappeared.

While Bob was at the gate making his "motion," Sandy said: "Say, Joe, Mirandy's on th' war path, sure; can't I git out over th' back fence?"

"No; keep still, and stay where you are. And James, watch for Mrs. Arlington, and don't let us frighten her away again," and James went out to the driveway entrance and stood guard.

When Bob returned with the word that the widow was coming, Joe said: "Don't say that I'm here, understand," and he hid himself in a three cornered screen.

Mrs. Talbut stalked boldly in, expecting to find Sandy, and when she saw no one, she asked: "Where be they?"

"I hain't found 'em yet," replied Bob.

"Be y' sure y' *saw* 'em *come* in?"

"With my own eyes," he said.

"Then *do* yer du*tee* an' search the premi*sez* an' proper*tee*."

When Bob approached the curtains, Joe attracted his attention with a sharp "hist," and motioned him to keep away.

"What wuz that?" exclaimed Mrs. Talbut. "It soun*ded* like a so*dee* foun*tain*."

Joe raised the screen a little from the floor, and took a step or two toward the door, just to see what Mrs. Talbut would do.

"Saints above *us*!" she almost shouted, "th' fur*na*chur is go*ing* out *the* door."

Then she whispered to Bob: "It's San*dee* Tal*but*, that's who 'tis. Give me *your* club. I'll trounce th' scal'*wag*."

"Do y' want th' badge, too," asked Bob, as he handed her the club.

"Now, *git* yer han'*cuffs* out, an *be* red-*dee* t' grab '*im*."

As Mrs. Talbut charged on the screen with the uplifted club, Joe unfolded it from around him and stood in front of her, saying: "What's the matter, widow."

Mrs. Talbut just squatted right down on the floor, and gasped, "Joe Mil*ler*! You wretch!"

"Now, don't get excited, widow," said

Joe, assisting Mrs. Talbut to a chair by the table.

"Off-*ficer*, *a*-rest him," demanded Mrs. Talbut, pointing to Joe.

"Can't arrest the Mayor," said Bob.

"Mer*cee* on *me*; am I hav*ing* th' night *mare*, I won*der*," she said, putting her hand to her head.

"I don't think so, widow; you haven't got your night dress on," said Joe.

"Now, I am *all* mud*delled* up. Bob said twuz San*dee* what come *in* here. He's stole Ja*nee* away, an' I'm that *dee*-stracted I *could* cry."

"No one has stolen Janie, Mrs. Talbut. She is safe and sound, and happy," and while Joe was speaking he was bringing Janie from behind the curtains.

When Mrs. Talbut turned and said: "Where is she, I'd—" Janie stood beside her.

"Why, Ja*nee* Tal*but;* sakes *a*live chile," and after Mrs. Talbut had kissed her, she held Janie at arm's length, and said: "Y' look *like* a rain*bow*."

"Uncle Joe fetched pop an' me up to th' city fer a good time, an' bought me

this new hat an' dress an' slippers, too."

"Now, widow, y' see Janie is all right," said Joe, "so sop up your tears and save them for Sandy."

"Has San*dee* *been* hurt?" she asked, anxiously, which was the first concern she had shown for his welfare in a long time.

"No, but' he's expectin' to be," replied Joe, as he motioned Sandy to come from behind the curtains.

"Ja*nee*, is yer fa*ther* hurt?" asked Mrs. Talbut.

"Pop said his feet wuz hurtenen 'is shoes some, that's all."

Sandy screwed up courage enough to edge around from behind Miranda, until she caught sight of him.

"Gra*shuss* good*ness*, what's that!" she exclaimed, "San*dee* Tal*but*; drunk an' dressed up, *I* 'spose."

"No, widow; sober as a judge," said Joe, proudly, and also bracing Sandy up by physical assistance to face Miranda.

"Law sakes! He looks too *re*spect*able* to be *re*cog*nized*."

"Y' don't ashamed be me uv y' now can I Mirandy," was as straight as he could get what he wanted to say.

"Well, I ain't a*going* to *en*tangle *my*-self by any ad*mir*ashun; *but* why did*dent* y' tell m' y' wuz go*ing*. Whose resi*dense* is zis, an' what's *it* all *a*bout?"

"This is Mrs. Arlington's city home," said Joe.

"Dew tell," said Miranda, rising and taking in all the furnishings, with her head thrown back to give her eyes and mouth both room to stay wide open at the same time without scratching her chin on her scarf pin.

"And Sandy can tell y' all th' rest," said Joe. "Just dry yer eyes, an' take a walk out among the flower beds there, an' ease yer nerves, widow. Here, Bob, you look after Janie," and Bob and Janie started along ahead, through the observatory, and out into the garden.

"*And* how *a*bout me," asked Miranda, when she saw that she was not included in Bob's care.

"Why, Sandy is here," said Joe.

"Yes, Mirandy, and I'm so*bur*," and Sandy was all puffed up with pleasure and pride, but Miranda's face was smileless.

"That's jest th' trou*bell*," she said. "When you're so*bur* yer too coax*in*' t' be

trust*ted*," and Mrs. Talbut talked fast and walked fast, to overtake Bob and Janie, leaving Sandy stiffened into a statue, and leaning a little forward, as though stuck in the middle of a half finished bow.

"What'll I do now, Joe," he said, still helplessly holding his position like an automatic figure, dependent on some one to push the button.

"Well, catch up to Miranda, and be game, if you die cooling off," said Joe.

Sandy started, and a moment later James looked in, and said: "They're walking together, and the little girl, too."

"Then call the policeman back, James," and when Bob returned and saluted Joe at the door, Joe returned the salute, and said: "Chief, change your beat," and Bob saluted again and disappeared in the opposite direction from which he had come.

"Mrs. Arlington returned while you were being arrested, sir; I told her you were here, sir."

"Yes, yes; and what did she say, James," asked Joe, eagerly.

"She said she would hurry, sir,"

Joe smiled all over his face and said: "Smile with me, James; I'm so happy, I need help."

"I'm not allowed to smile out loud, sir; I'll smile inwardly, sir," and after watching the expression on James' face for a moment, Joe told him not to do it, it hurt him.

—oo—

A Sure Enough Engagement, in an Unexpected Way, for Mildred's Mother and Joe.

"James, this is our busy day," said Joe; "I only hope that Mrs. Arlington don't see that policeman before I have a chance to tell her what it is. Now, I wonder if this second pint of ice cream is fit to drink yet," and while Joe was holding it up by the string handle, looking for leaks in the bottom of the box, the door opened, and Mr. Burbage came blustering in.

Not seeing Joe, he said to James: "Well, James, I did a good job on that vinegar buyer; he didn't get a chance to get a word in edgeways."

Joe stood as though transfixed, holding the box of ice cream, and when Mr. Burbage saw him, he exclaimed: "What! have you followed me here?"

"I don't think so," said Joe; "I'm here first."

"Like all other cranks, looking for revenge, I suppose; perhaps with a bomb," and just at that moment he caught

sight of the ice cream box which Joe was still holding up about even with the top of his head, and backed toward the door, almost shouting: "Here! What's that; don't you dare let that drop; don't you dare."

"I'm not letting it drop; it's dropping itself," replied Joe, and he wiped a few drops of ice cream from the bottom of the box with his finger.

"Anywhere but in this house; you come back to my office," continued Mr. Burbage, frantic with fear.

"I don't think it's running for office yet," said Joe.

"I know what it is; it's dynamite!"

"No, taint," replied Joe; "it's vanilla. Have some?" and he opened the box and showed Mr. Burbage the ice cream.

When able to think without the friction of fear on his mental faculties, Mr. Burbage spoke in his natural tone: "Say, what is your business here, in my sister's house?"

"Your sister's house?" repeated Joe, slowly, as though mystified. "Why, is Mrs. Arlington your sister?"

"She certainly is," replied Mr. Burbage, emphatically.

"Why, I didn't know that," said Joe; and he was so confused that the best he could think to say was: "I met Mrs. Arlington at the Sanitarium."

"Well, that doesn't privilege you to annoy her here," replied Mr. Burbage.

"I just thought I'd pay my respects with a little ice cream and a bouquet," and he pointed to the bunch of flowers on the table.

The sight of the red roses maddened Mr. Burbage the same as a red blanket maddens a bull.

"What! Why, you poor deluded dough-headed idiot. You, present a bouquet to my sister; take your bouquet and go;" and he threw the roses with such force that they struck Joe squarely in the face before he had time to catch them.

For the moment there was enough anger in Joe's eyes to have avenged the insult by a disarrangement of Mr. Burbage's features that would have required a surgeon to repair, but, Joe thought of Mr. Burbage's sister and saved her brother that expense.

"James, show this Romeo the door."

"He needn't," replied Joe; "I've got th'

door right in my hand," and he stood in the door way with his hand on the knob.

"Ask my sister to please come here at once," said Mr. Burbage.

"Mrs. Arlington is coming now, sir; I announced this gentleman before you came in."

"James, I guess you better say that I took my clothes and went."

Joe was about to pull the outside door closed after him, but he heard Mrs. Arlington's voice and held it ajar, and listened, and heard her say: "Why brother dear, I didn't know that you were here, too; but, where is my friend; my good, kind and true friend."

When he heard this he looked in from behind the door and said, "Do you mean me, Mrs. Arlington?"

By the sound of the voice she knew she was looking at Joe Miller; and Joe stood silent and motionless, as though before a camera.

"At last, Mr. Miller; so, this is you," and her face was radiant with smiles.

"Yes, Mrs. Arlington, this is 'Sand Crabs;'" and as their hands met, Joe smiled and looked steadily into her eyes,

wondering how near he resembled what she had expected him to look like.

Mrs. Arlington seemed to be in a trance of joy,while her brother was dumbfounded into a quietus of unadulterated silence, excepting for the sound of his rapid respiration, which, for a few seconds, was the extent of his vocal vitality.

"Why! Sister! You are making a ridiculous mistake," he gasped; "this man is that vinegar buyer I told you of, and I have just discharged him."

"No, brother, no;" said Mrs. Arlington, this gentleman is Mr. Miller, who was at all times so devoted to my comfort."

"Excepting when I was buying vinegar," said Joe.

"So, that was the secret part of your occupation, was it, buying vinegar for my brother?"

"But I didn't know he was your brother," replied Joe.

"And I didn't know that he was Joe Miller," replied Mr. Burbage; "I thought his name was Bradley."

"Well, that was my *nom-de-vinegar*," said Joe.

"But, I hope you don't call buying three

barrels of vinegar in two weeks occupation? Where did he spend the rest of his time?" Mr. Burbage asked.

"Being kind to me," replied his sister.

"Yes sir; and right according to your instructions," and Joe took a letter from his pocket and handed it to Mr. Burbage, saying: "You refused to read it at your office."

Mr. Burbage read aloud—"He must be kind and gentle, and be able to judge the true heart of a woman."

"Why, this is my letter to young Talbut," he exclaimed, "telling him what kind of a man I wanted for Mildred's husband."

"Well, that's all I had to go by," said Joe; "I've done th' best I could; and, without knowing it, I've kept my services right inside th' family; you have the vinegar and your sister has the rest.'

Joe laughed, and so did Mrs. Arlington, but not Mr. Burbage. He was thinking of what William Henry had said about Joe Miller, and he was more convinced than ever, that he was a trickster.

As he walked toward the door, he said to Mrs. Arlington: "I will return shortly,

with some papers for you to sign; and—and—will he be here?"

"Yes, brother; we are going to have a good old fashioned visit, and I want you to know Mr. Miller better."

"Yes, I hope to," replied Mr. Burbage, in a significant tone, which Joe understood perfectly to mean that he was a long way yet from being at all popular with Mr. Burbage. "My advise to you, sister, is not to be too generous with your confidence in people, without substantial proof of their worthiness."

When Mrs. Arlington had closed the door after her brother she turned to Joe, and said: "Brother means well, Mr. Miller. When you know each other better, you'll be the best of friends."

While she was speaking, Joe stepped quickly to her, took her hand, and she let him lead her toward a chair.

"Why, the idea;" and Mrs. Arlington suddenly stopped, and tried to laugh just a little to overcome her embarrassment; "here I am letting you lead me along just as you used to."

"Well, what do you think of that," replied Joe, even more embarrassed than Mrs. Arlington. "I forgot all about it, myself."

"Ever since my sight has been restored I have been looking forward to seeing you, my true friend, as one of the pleasantest moments of my life. Often, Mildred has described to me how you looked, and then for hours I would sit alone and frame your features in my mind; and I'm not a bit disappointed."

"Well, I'm glad you like the frame," replied Joe.

"And I want to thank you for proving to me, and to Mildred the insincerity of my young attorney, Mr. Stripe."

After Joe had accepted Mrs. Arlington's thanks by shaking her hand, he forget to let go of it.

"By our pretended engagement, you mean," he asked.

"Yes," she replied.

"And how bravely you carried it all out; just as we had planned it; I held your hand, do you remember?" and they both smiled.

"And how I trembled," she replied.

"And then I held it a little tighter," he said, and also did; and Mrs. Arlington blushed and seemed to enjoy the convenience of his having hold of her hand at such an opportune time; "and, like a true born actress, you said, 'and I have chosen Mr. Miller.'"

"And how well you played your part, too," said Mrs. Arlington, "just as though it was absolute truth."

"That was because I wished it was," and Joe had said what he wouldn't have dared to say in any other way.

"You did?" asked Mrs. Arlington.

Joe raised his eyes to hers and said frankly: "Yes; I did," and waited for the result of his wild words of love.

"And so did I," she replied, just loud enough for him to hear, and looked away to keep from seeing him looking at her.

"You did?" repeated Joe, and his heart beat loud and his voice was low; "and has your mind changed since then?"

"Not a bit," she replied.

"Neither has mine," said Joe; and he didn't have to lean forward very much when he kissed her.

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Sour Vinegar
Brings Joe to a Heaven of Honey and Sweet Love.

Mildred and Walter, and Sandy and Miranda, and Janie and Bob all came in from the garden together.

When Joe told them the news, Sandy and Walter, in turn, told some pleasant things about themselves that had just happened.

While they were exchanging congratulations, Mr. Burbage burst in upon them, followed by William Henry.

"I congratulate you upon the recovery of your sight, Mrs. Arlington; with all my heart I share your happiness," he said, "I have, at last, arranged the papers, complete, for you to sign. Shall I submit them to Mr. Miller," and he drew two documents from his pocket.

"If you wish," replied Mrs. Arlington.

"Perhaps I had better look them over," said, Joe, giving William Henry a wholesale look of mistrust.

"Then please to excuse us for a moment, while I explain to Mr. Miller my

reasons for a certain, very important clause," and Joe and William Henry stood apart from the others while he gave to Joe a whispered explanation.

"This paper is a bogus transfer, valueless; the bonds and mortgages and cash deposits are all named in this paper, which you can purposely withhold. Get her to sign the bogus transfer; then, after you are married, you can assert your right to the entire estate."

"That's clever," whispered Joe; "mighty clever."

"I thought you'd say so," and William Henry turned to Mrs. Arlington and said: "I presume you are willing to accept Mr. Miller's advice?"

"Certainly; if he wishes me to sign the transfer, I will do so; but, this is all unnecessary now, Mr. Miller, I can trust you."

"And so can I trust you. What's yours is yours, and what's mine I'll make you a present of. I cannot allow Mr. Stripe's generosity in this matter to pass unnoticed. He has prepared two papers, a bogus transfer and a bonafide one. He advises me to withhold this

genuine one and to get you to sign the bogus one, so that after we are married, I can assert my claim to the entire estate as the 'oldest male member of the family.' Your attorney has made an honest effort in the interest of his client to test my honesty, and I thank him for this opportunity to prove that I have no designs on the Arlington estate. Mrs. Arlington, please to sign this transfer which gives to you all that is yours, exclusively and forever."

"Mr. Stripe is no longer my attorney, Mr. Miller; he is our attorney, and we must accept his advise. I will sign the bogus one, as he wishes," said Mrs. Arlington, and she did so.

William Henry's lips were livid, his eyes were lifeless, and he recoiled like a frightened lizard.

Bob had no regard for William Henry's state of mind and laughed so loud that he could be heard in the street.

"James, wake up my hat, I'm going out for more ice cream," said Joe; then, to add the finishing sting to William Henry's torture, he said: "I think your shoe is untied again."

When William Henry bolted through the door without stopping to say farewell to anyone, even Mr. Burbage burst out laughing, and shook hands with Joe, saying: "Bradley, you're a cracker-jack."

"No I'm your brother-in-law," replied Joe.

The next week Sandy and Miranda attended three weddings, the last one being their own, for they were married over again and Sandy became Mildred's father-in-law.

And so that busy-bee, Joe Miller, that buzzed into Boscombs Corners that June afternoon, with a sunny disposition and a pleasant smile, found a haven of rest in a heaven of honey.

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